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**John Inc.: The making of Japan's salaried men into clients of high school  
prostitutes**

by

**Samantha Blake Rubin**



**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts**

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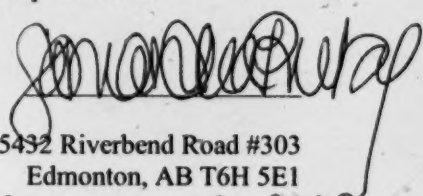
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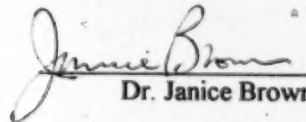
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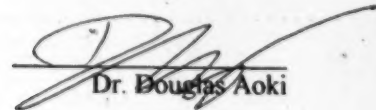
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Dr. Satoshi Ikeda



Dr. Janice Brown



Dr. Douglas Aoki

December 18, 2001



Light is not recognized except through darkness.  
- Jewish proverb

### Abstract

This sociological analysis of Japanese underage prostitution focuses on the men who purchase sexual services ("johns"). Throughout the 1990s, many middle-aged, corporate employees ("*sararîman*") engaged in "compensated dating" (*enjo kôsai*) in which a man purchases a date with a female high school student. Dating activities can include dining out, singing *karaoke*, or having sex. *Sararîman* have demanding lives and have little time for their physical and emotional needs. Purchasing sex from underage prostitutes allows *sararîman* to fulfill these needs.

This thesis describes three factors that encourage *sararîman* to purchase sex from underage girls: education, family, and the corporation. The influence of formal education, the pressures of daily family life, and obligation to the corporation all influence the behavior of *sararîman*. It is mistaken to presume that Japanese men are born to be johns. Rather, this transformation is a lifelong process starting with education in childhood on through to corporate socialization in adulthood.

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## Table of Contents

|                                                                                                                                      |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>INTRODUCTION</b>                                                                                                                  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>CHAPTER ONE: THE LAND OF THE RISING YEN</b>                                                                                       | <b>11</b> |
| From indigence to affluence and on to bankruptcy: a brief history of the post World War Two Japanese economy                         | 11        |
| The consumer craze: paving the way to monetary wealth and moral decay on the horizon                                                 | 14        |
| Bubbletime and the living is easy: the excessive mentality of wealth                                                                 | 19        |
| Men's zippers are not the only things breaking open in the 1990s: the bubble bursts                                                  | 21        |
| The creation of a two-tiered society and the repercussions of high-speed economic growth                                             | 24        |
| From corporate samurai to sexual samurai: the penis replaces the pocket calculator and ballpoint pen                                 | 27        |
| The portrayal of <i>sarariman</i> in comic books, novels, and movies                                                                 | 29        |
| The miracle and all its glory: why economic success breeds moral decline                                                             | 30        |
| If I buy you a cellular phone will you let me be your date?                                                                          | 34        |
| Receiving sexual satisfaction for the first time in his life: <i>enjo kôsai</i> is the answer to a lonely <i>sarariman</i> 's dreams | 36        |
| Getting connected: how the girls obtain their customers and how the johns seek out their "dates"                                     | 39        |
| <b>CHAPTER TWO: EDUCATING TARÔ AT HOME AND IN SCHOOL</b>                                                                             | <b>46</b> |
| The initial development of "johnhood"                                                                                                | 46        |
| Academic credentials and gender determine your worth                                                                                 | 47        |
| Education mamas and anxiety-ridden kids                                                                                              | 52        |
| <i>Amae</i> and the lenient years                                                                                                    | 55        |
| Japan's educational system: creating the myth of homogeneity                                                                         | 58        |
| Bullying: molding boys into masochists so they can fit in at the corporation                                                         | 59        |
| While dad is away his son develops a mother complex                                                                                  | 65        |
| The birds and the bees: sex education or lack thereof                                                                                | 70        |

|                                                                        |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>CHAPTER THREE: HOW JAPAN INC. BECAME JOHN INC.</b>                  | <b>76</b>  |
| Welcome to the corporation, now give us your soul                      | 76         |
| Oh the stress of it all! White-collar resentment rising                | 83         |
| Thinning wallets and male dowries                                      | 85         |
| "In-house" divorce                                                     | 90         |
| Antagonists in the workplace: office ladies and their economic freedom | 93         |
| Coping with the pressure: sex, booze, cigarettes, and suicide          | 95         |
| Cutting the umbilical cord to the company: retired life                | 98         |
| High school girls as sex objects: the Lolita complex                   | 102        |
| Mother may I? Maternalizing wives                                      | 105        |
| Waiting to exhale: <i>settai</i> the stress reliever                   | 108        |
| The compartmentalization of <i>sarariman</i> 's lives                  | 112        |
| Show me the money!                                                     | 114        |
| <b>CONCLUSION</b>                                                      | <b>117</b> |
| Boy today, john tomorrow?                                              | 117        |
| <b>ENDNOTES</b>                                                        | <b>122</b> |
| <b>GLOSSARY OF JAPANESE TERMS</b>                                      | <b>131</b> |
| <b>REFERENCE LIST</b>                                                  | <b>138</b> |

## List of Figures

FIGURE 1: *PINKU CHIRASHI*

44

FIGURE 2: TISSUE

45



## INTRODUCTION

In any society, there invariably exists an underbelly and Japan is certainly no exception; the proof of this "darker side" resides in the presence of the *mizu shōbai* (literally "the water business"). The term refers to the stream of customers at restaurants, pubs, and other nighttime entertainment spots. Customers are likened to water flowing from a tap, either it gushes out with full force or slowly drips dry.

This business is precarious, as earnings are solely dependent on customers' patronage. Many of these "entertainment" establishments offer a wide variety of sexual services for consumers. Some have researched and written about the Japanese sex industry to cater to a particular audience<sup>1</sup>. Prostitution and the existence of the *mizu shōbai* are not recent phenomenon in Japan. In the Kamakura Period (1185 – 1333), men received sexual service from bathhouse masseuses known as *ōyuna* (literally "big hot water women") and their apprentices, *koyuna* ("small hot water women") aged 12 to 15 years (Constantine 33). Over time, the *mizu shōbai* diversified and became an integral part of the Edo Period (1603 – 1867). Women, girls, and young boys whose sexual services were sought lived in walled areas called *yūkaku* ("pleasure quarters"). Popular artwork of the time often depicted the courtesans and brothels of the *yūkaku*. Many patrons wanted a commemoration of their time spent in the walled cities; purchasing a wood block print of a noted courtesan was a sure way to immortalize their sexual pursuits (Longstreet 207-09). The largest and most notorious pleasure quarters in Japan, the Yoshiwara was located in the capital of Edo



(present day Tokyo)<sup>2</sup>. In the late 1700s, there were approximately two hundred government recognized licensed pleasure quarters throughout Japan (Downer 99-100). A more modern day pleasure quarters, Yokohama's Koganechô area, housed one hundred and eighty small, unlicensed brothels that thrived in the early 1950s (Constantine 18).

A series of publications ranging from anthropological texts to journalistic articles have been published on the phenomenon of the 1980s and 1990s *mizu shôbai*. Most of them concentrate on women's involvement in the trade and more often than not blame Japanese girls' excessive consumerism as the culprit for getting them into that lifestyle<sup>3</sup>. Not surprisingly, there is a lack of information available on male patrons ("johns"). Men's participation is rarely mentioned if at all.

Reviewing the research literature in this area revealed there was a narrow scope with few methodologies used. Most were anthropological case studies, descriptive examples of services offered in the sex trade written for a general audience, or historical accounts of prostitution in Japan<sup>4</sup>. Empirical data on the taboo subject of patrons' involvement has been difficult to find as most "official" police statistics on the issue of prostitution in Japan are vague and commonly focus on the number of women in the sex trade who have been taken into custody<sup>5</sup>. Clearly, a vacuum exists in the literature available on Japanese johns and my research intends to fill this void.

In my study, I have employed the methodology of historical sociology and relied on primary and secondary archival material. My reasons for using

historical sociology as a methodology are simple. Without putting the Japanese sex trade into historical perspective and considering that this is a sociological issue, it would be difficult to comprehend why the "water business" is flourishing today. Many times I had to be quite creative when searching for useful information, as reference materials on the controversial subject of the Japanese sex trade and patrons' involvement were extremely limited or nonexistent. To the best of my knowledge, no scholarly research has yet been undertaken on the sex industry in post World War Two Japan or on Japanese johns. Due to a lack of literature on the subject, I attempted to incorporate a wide variety of other source materials into my thesis including films and television programs for a more inclusive perspective. I would have preferred to conduct personal interviews with the johns themselves, but given that many middle-aged Japanese businessmen would be unlikely to speak frankly to a foreign woman about their sex lives, this method would have been very difficult. Furthermore, in conducting interviews on such a sensitive topic as this, it would be necessary to consider some of the limitations such as sobriety of the respondents and or aggrandizement of their encounters.

The reason for the significant involvement of johns in the sex industry is complex and multi-layered. As the individual and society are always changing, there is no use for universalizing theories in this case. Creating a conveniently compact theory to explain the behavior of many individuals is not the purpose of my work and certainly there is no one set theory that exists to explain the whole of Japanese society. Instead, I intend to provide a detailed account of many

salaries men's<sup>6</sup> lives since childhood and their subsequent involvement in purchasing sex. The objective of my research is to create a narrative that includes different aspects of historical and social development in Japan which as a total highlight and provide a better understanding of the issue at hand. When examining individual behavior, it is necessary to incorporate these different aspects in order to explain it. I am not attempting to psychologically profile or analyze Japanese johns' behavior. Instead, this thesis is a narrative of Japanese society from a particular angle.

As an outsider who is neither Japanese nor raised in Japan, I had to constantly remind myself when engaging in this research that I have been socialized to subscribe to the moral principles of my own culture and religion. Consequently, these imbedded social values might very well color my perception about Japan. It is virtually impossible for anyone to be completely objective when studying another society and it is difficult to eradicate one's conscious and or subliminal preconceived notions on delicate issues such as sexual mores. From the onset of this research, I have attempted to recognize and confront my presuppositions about Japanese society and simply be aware of my potential bias.

The uniqueness of my work and significance of this study is to highlight Japanese men's involvement in prostitution. I hope to bring "the john" out into the limelight and put to rest the notion of accepting that the male purchase of sex is "natural" and "inherent" behavior in men. What a disservice it would be to the entire male population to label them all as prospective johns. Instead, I intend to argue that such prostitution-purchasing behavior is a result of socialization over a

period of many years, while acknowledging that such socialization does not automatically transform all Japanese men into johns.

Do not presume that because I have chosen to highlight men's involvement as johns that I condone their conduct. Rather, my intent is to offer a behind-the-scenes look at the making of a Japanese john, in order to shed some light onto the intricate dynamics of the situation. All too often the public is preoccupied with the "sinister" behavior and motive on the part of the stigmatized prostitute, rarely is the john's intention considered (Group Sisterhood 94-95). I wish to change this.

I am aware of the potential applicability of my research to other societies, however the scope of this research is limited to Japan. Furthermore, I recognize that many other societies also have thriving sex industries and johns. I do not wish to infer that Japan is the only country in the world with such an underbelly. Nevertheless, this is a thesis about Japanese johns and is not a comparative study.

I would like to underline that not every Japanese man is a john and Japanese male sexuality is diverse. Some men may choose to negotiate their sexuality by masturbating to *manga* (comic books which often depict erotic scenes) pornographic magazines readily available in public vending machines, or adult videos and *hentai anime*<sup>7</sup> (erotic or pornographic animated films) instead of buying sexual services which require direct contact with another person. Some married men may have mistresses on the side, some men might not engage in sexual activity any longer due to impotence or a host of other physical or

emotional problems, and some men have a monogamous sexual relationship with their wives or girlfriends.

Furthermore, those that prefer to pay for sex may not all frequent the same types of places. Japan has a plethora of *mizu shôbai* establishments involved in the *shasei sangyô* ("ejaculation industry") which cater to any kind of fantasy and/or budget of the consumer. *Sôpu* (abbreviation of "Soapland") is a pseudo sauna-massage parlor wherein clients can be bathed and sexually serviced at the same time. *Herusu* (abbreviation of "Fashion Health") offers more discounted services than *sôpu* and only allows anal intercourse. *Ime kura* (abbreviation of "Image Club") provides women costumed in outfits tailored to their clients' fantasies such as secretaries, nurses, schoolgirls, etc. The women are required to perform their requested roles while offering sexual massage, oral sex, and anal penetration. *Kyabarê* ("cabaret") is a dimly lit bar wherein customers can enjoy drinking beer and making small talk with a woman while she manually or orally stimulates them<sup>8</sup>.

It would be incorrect to assume that all Japanese men are heterosexual. Thriving gay populations exist all over Japan; gay and lesbian erotic publications and videos, and after-hours clubs and bars both public and underground are especially prevalent in the bigger cities such as Tokyo and Osaka. A society such as Japan that focuses on the importance of a heterosexual marriage complete with bearing children, forces many gay men and lesbians to be in the closet about their sexuality. Many are in constant fear of losing their jobs or of being excommunicated from their families<sup>9</sup> (Summerhawk, McMahon, and McDonald



5-6; Okoge). To presume on the basis of many leading clandestine lives that gays do not exist in Japan is ignorant. However, for the purpose of this paper, I will focus only on those men that are involved in purchasing sex and companionship from teenage high school girls as this seems to be one the most pervasive and continuing social problems in Japanese society today (Kawai 47).

In order to understand the john's behavior, this thesis pays special attention to the type of prostitution called *enjo kôsai* ("compensated dating"). Throughout the 1990s, many middle-aged white-collar workers engaged in "compensated dating" wherein they purchased companionship with a female high school student. Dating activities range from dining out to having sexual intercourse in exchange for monetary compensation.

Post World War Two Japan has been heralded by many as an "economic miracle," a modern-day success story of the Phoenix rising from the ashes of nationwide wartime devastation to become an industrial giant. Rapid industrialization coupled with fierce capitalism led to the existence of the soaring 1980s "Bubble Economy," which set the tone for Japan to emerge as a potential successor of the United States in global economic leadership. Since that time, the bubble has burst and Japan's economy has undergone protracted recession and deflation, although many of the leisurely pursuits of wealthier times still prevail. "Success" and "progress" do not come without grave consequences. Environmental degradation, water and air pollution, excessive consumption, as well as over-commodification of material goods and human life are not the only repercussions of purely capitalist ventures. In the pursuit of material wealth,



Japan has also compromised the welfare of its citizens, many of which were responsible for bringing the country to its favorable status today.

The *sararîman* (literally "salaried man" from the English term) of Japan have been acknowledged by many to be the backbone of the business world. Without their tireless efforts to achieve domestic financial prosperity, sometimes resulting in *karôshi* ("death from overwork"), it is doubtful whether Japan would have achieved such wide-ranged commercial achievement. Characteristics of the *sararîman* include being dependable, intensely loyal to his corporation, dedicated and self-sacrificing (Vogel 160-61). The average person in Japan, if asked, would reply without hesitation that the above traits were positive and commendable to have. Unfortunately, the human or dark side of existing as a *sararîman* has often been ignored in the name of "advancement." From early childhood until their senior years, most *sararîman* are under so much pressure from society, their families, and the corporation that they have little or no self-worth and most long for praise and approval from others.

This paper examines three factors which, when combined, encourage *sararîman* to seek refuge from their daily lives by purchasing sex from high school prostitutes. These factors are education, family, and the corporation. The influence of the educational system in Japan, the pressures of daily family life, and obligation to the corporation all contribute to the behavior patterns of the *sararîman*. Simply put, post World War Two Japanese society is conducive to transforming many Japanese businessmen into johns. The economic wealth achieved during the postwar period encouraged the social conditions wherein

many Japanese men were driven to become johns<sup>10</sup>. My study brings the Japanese john into the limelight and reveals his motivation for purchasing sex from underage girls. I hope that by exposing the john's motivation I have been able to create awareness surrounding this taboo subject. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no research conducted that examines Japanese johns' motives for purchasing prostitution. My study begins to fill this gap. It is my hope that my study encourages other researchers to examine and write about the neglected subjects of Japanese "johnhood" and the sex industry in general.

The organization of the thesis is divided into three main chapters. Chapter one examines how in a short amount of time Japan went from a war-ravaged, impoverished country to one of the wealthiest industrialized nations in the world and subsequently descended to economic bankruptcy and moral decay. The constitution of the main cog in Japan's economic wheel, the *sarariman*, is also investigated and facts and figures on his personal involvement with teenage prostitution are revealed.

Chapter two deals with the Japanese educational system and its significant influence on young men. Early childhood development on through to adolescence is explored as well as Japanese family life in the home and the relationship between children and their parents. Subjects such as the long-term effects of bullying, absentee fathers, and mothers vicariously striving for their children's academic success are examined. The gender socialization of children and prevailing attitudes toward sex are also highlighted. These aspects of Japanese society illustrate the stressful nature of Japanese life. This thesis suggests that this

stress is one of the reasons *sarariman* patronize prostitutes, which is one venue for relaxation, comfort, and self-affirmation.

Chapter three delves into how Japan became a nation comprised of many johns as the corporation sanctions patronage of the sex industry. The impact of the corporation on Japanese men's lives is also examined. Various stresses inflicted on white-collar male employees are examined throughout their working lives and in retirement. The "maternalization" of wives adds to the compartmentalization of men's lives by relegating sex to the "play sphere" instead of the domestic sphere. Alienation from their family becomes one of the motivations for purchasing dates with teenage prostitutes.

I conclude, after describing the three components of Japanese culture that impact the lifestyles of the *sarariman*, that the social structure in place creates the need and opportunity for hiring teenage prostitutes. Although these men have individual choice, the situations in which they live and work constrain their lives in such a way to make the use of prostitutes attractive and acceptable. I then identify an area for further research into this topic. One of the areas that needs further research is the issue of how *sarariman* obtain the time and money to engage in *enjo kôsai*. Since they have little control over their time and finances, it remains unclear how they are able to participate in this activity at such a high rate. Uncovering this information will expand our understanding of their behavior.

Throughout this thesis, Japanese names have been written in the Japanese order with the family name first.

## **CHAPTER ONE: THE LAND OF THE RISING YEN**

### **From indigence to affluence and on to bankruptcy: a brief history of the post World War Two Japanese economy**

1945 was truly the year of living desperately in Japan. The Japanese economy was almost completely destroyed at the time of surrender to the United States and hyperinflation further endangered the national economy. In addition to a dismal, war-torn landscape, there were other more threatening problems that faced Japanese citizens upon the end of World War Two. In order to shed light on the ascent of the Japanese economy from indigence to affluence and subsequent descent to financial ruin and moral decay of its corporate employees, I will briefly detail the historical course of the Japanese economy from 1945 until present.

In August 1945, industrial production in Japan declined to a small percentage of what it had been prior to the war and food production decreased by about thirty percent. Consequently, toward the end of 1945, a severe food crisis developed that continued until the middle of 1946 (Yoshihara 20). The Japanese were quite literally starving. Often, in hopes of attaining sustenance they had to rely on American occupational soldiers wanting to exchange a bar of chocolate for a picturesque post card. It was a common occurrence that women even offered to trade their prized kimono for food (Mishima 69-70).

As part of their responsibility in rebuilding a devastated Japan, the Supreme Command of the Allied Powers (SCAP) wanted to prevent disease and unrest and decided to permit the economy to return to its pre-war standing.

Nursing the economy back to health resulted in a positive change in the welfare of the Japanese people. In 1946, SCAP commenced food aid as a means of preventing a famine that threatened the population. Besides food, the SCAP policy determined that aid was also to be administered in the form of coal, ore, oil, iron, and other raw materials necessary for the survival of Japanese industry (Yoshihara 22).

It was under extremely severe conditions that economic recovery proceeded. The southern cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were devastated by atomic bombings; further north numerous firebomb raids had flattened the capital city of Tokyo and most major cities. It was estimated that bombing by the Allies had destroyed about twenty-five percent of Japan's national wealth. Japanese overseas assets, which had previously provided revenue, were confiscated (Yoshihara 20). Property destruction from bombings in the major cities had caused a housing shortage. To add insult to injury, the occupational forces demanded the use of the few remaining standing buildings and priority usage of railroads. In addition, several million Japanese residing in the former colonies were forced to return to Japan in order to look for jobs in the already crowded home market which was under the condition of a severe housing shortage. Even though there had been a tremendous number of war casualties, the problem of unemployment still became critical (Smith 64). Many people were rendered homeless and jobless, and they became part of the population living on the streets littered with debris. Numerous children and adults were forced to beg or steal money and food in order to survive (Mishima 88-91).



Over the course of the next few years, the destitute population was nourished, disease declined, and the economy slowly began to improve. By the end of 1948, SCAP was strongly encouraging the Japanese government to take measures to stabilize the economy and to promote economic development beyond pre-war levels. In 1948, concerned that the civil war in China was advancing in favor of the communists, the United States moved to support Japan as the country with the best chance of opposing communism in Asia (Bailey 37). As the Cold War approached, many American politicians feared that continued economic distress in Japan could result in the weary population welcoming communism (Smith 54). Financially backing Japan was assuredly a strategic move; what better way to combat America's biggest nemesis, communist China and the socialist USSR, than to make Japan a paradigm of economic success for other struggling Asian nations to envy?

When the Korean War ensued in June 1950, Japan came to be used as a supply base as well as a place of "rest and relaxation" for American servicemen. It is important to note that sexual recreation was included under the rubric of "rest and relaxation." American servicemen demanded sexual gratification and many poverty-stricken and unemployed Japanese women turned to prostitution to feed themselves and their families. Soldiers especially attracted prostitutes to the areas surrounding the military bases (Shiga-Fujime 8).

Earnings reaped from sexual labor were not the only augmentation to the Japanese economy. Profits made in repairing US military vehicles stimulated



Japan's automobile industry. Japanese goods and services were in high demand and the economy experienced the first boom of the postwar period (Smith 86-87).

This growth spurt gave a final push to economic recovery, and enabled many Japanese corporations to gain large profits. Companies retained a large portion of these profits and used them later for plant renewal and expansion and for introduction of technology from abroad. As their procedures became effective in regulating economic balance, the occupational administration decided to remove various measures of direct control. Their efforts were successful; by mid-1950, the market economy had been essentially restored and was progressing smoothly. In line with this new policy, the United States established a move to end the occupation. In April 1952, SCAP officially ended the occupation of Japan (Yoshihara 22-23).

**The consumer craze: paving the way to monetary wealth and moral decay on the horizon**

With the restoration of the domestic economy, the 1950s and 60s ushered in an era of unprecedented consumerism in Japan that was fuelled by the pent-up demand for material goods. The various experiences and experiments of the war years provided a basis for developing new products with tremendous growth potential. There was also the chance to absorb new "modern" (Western) technology. Japan had become an ally of the United States; thus, as a direct result of attaining this privileged position, economic cooperation between the West and Japan increased. The backlog of science-based technology, which had developed rapidly during the 1930s and 1940s, could now be used to Japan's advantage (Yoshihara 24).

By 1960, heavy industry, which had become the driving force of Japanese exports, had improved its international competitiveness in ships, radios, steel, cement and several other products (including chemicals and machinery). As the mid-1960s approached, automobiles, synthetic fibers, and the latest electronic products such as tape recorders joined the list of major Japanese exports. Japanese exports were now occupying a critical position in the global economy (Yoshihara 26).

Although the Korean War gave the auto industry a boost, the great expansion of the industry did not occur until the 1960s (Smith 89). From 1960 to 1973, the volume of Japan's exports returned to the pre-war level and increased approximately seven times with an annual growth rate of about thirteen percent. In 1972, on account of this rapid increase, Japan became the world's largest exporter of synthetic fibers, rubber, pig iron and passenger cars (Yoshihara 26-27). Honda and Toyota were no longer foreign names to many Americans. The well-made and competitively priced Japanese automobiles gave many American car manufacturers a run for their money.

Domestic and international demand for Japanese goods continued and the volume of industrial production increased and diversified to include synthetic rubber, synthetic fibers, petro-chemicals, electronic goods, and other manufactured products. In terms of both volume and diversity, by the early 1970s, Japanese industry had become one of the most advanced in the world. This phenomenal growth of industry was apparent in Japan's Gross National Product<sup>11</sup> (GNP) which recorded a substantial increase.

From 1952 to 1958, Japan's GNP increased at an annual rate of 6.9 percent. When the growth rate surpassed ten percent in 1959, the world began to seriously pay attention to Japan's economy. In 1960, when the growth rate exceeded that of the previous year, Japanese industrial growth was undisputedly celebrated by being named an "economic miracle." Corporations dedicated to maintaining the "economic miracle" guaranteed *shūshin koyōsei* ("lifetime employment") for Japanese men. Stable employment was a welcome opportunity for those wishing to be a part of "Japan Inc."<sup>12</sup> High growth rates continued throughout the 1960s and 70s and the annual increase in GNP averaged ten percent (Yoshihara 27-28).

Manufacturers in Japan hoped to tap into other lucrative consumer markets. The domestic sphere was targeted for the production of new household luxuries. "Modern conveniences" of nuclear family living were readily available and in high demand by Japanese housewives wanting to emulate their American counterparts. Between 1953 and 1956, the production of washing machines increased eight times. In 1956, an exclusive one percent of Japanese households had a television set. By 1960, half of all Japanese families were proud owners of a television. The emerging giants of Japanese electronics such as Matsushita and Hitachi successfully achieved the explosive growth in the production of television sets and other electrical consumer goods (Smith 89).

The "consumer culture craze" and American style affluence were prevalent among many Japanese families during the 1960s and 1970s. The local media often cited the "three sacred treasures"<sup>13</sup> as necessities required to improve

modern Japanese living. These were the washing machine, television, and refrigerator, which were later followed by the essential "three C's": car, cooler (air conditioner), and color television (Skov and Moeran 28). Hollywood films also influenced how Japanese consumers spent their money. After years of watching American movies and not wanting to be left behind, the Japanese coveted the American dream often portrayed on the silver screen. Owning the big house, big car, and various other luxury goods became synonymous with the Japanese finally achieving "modernization" and "prosperity" (Schilling 33). Keeping up with the Jones's had become a national obsession.

The fact that the Olympics were held in Tokyo in 1964 proved to the rest of the world that Japan had become a "modern" nation; it also stimulated color television sales domestically. Almost all of Japanese homes had a television set by 1965; Japan's age of mass home entertainment had auspiciously begun (Schilling 35). Within the next decade, over ninety percent of the entire Japanese population owned appliances such as electric refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and color television sets (Asahi Shimbun 26).

The rise of mass consumerism had a profound impact on Japanese culture at large. In the 1970s, Japanese children traded interaction with their friends and traditional interactive pastimes such as playing marbles or spinning tops for the solitary enjoyment of watching television cartoons and comics. The mechanization and electrification of Japanese life had mostly the same effects as in the West, albeit in a much shorter time period (Schilling 38). In addition to

television, video games and computers in the 1980s provided an outlet for the young and old to indulge in escapism.

One grave result of this new individualized or isolated lifestyle was a sense of general alienation and a lack of desire to communicate or interact at great lengths with others. Traditionally, parents had instilled values and morals in their children. The age of traditionalism was passé. Now, the mass media commonly became the purveyor of a new type of societal ethics, which consisted mostly of purchasing brand-name commodities in order to achieve popularity and acceptance.

Many rites of passage in Japanese life became commodified. One such example is when a Japanese "child" becomes an "elementary school pupil" on April 1 following his or her sixth birthday. Typically, all elementary school students tend to wish for and invariably acquire a desk with a built in light and a plastic writing pad. This type of desk was invented in the 1970s. Generally, in order for a child to fit into the proper student role, parents must purchase numerous school supplies and the appropriate furniture to demonstrate their child's new identity (Skov and Moeran 56).

While their children were receiving goods for school, Japanese fathers in the workforce learned that less time spent with their families meant more time for indulging in nighttime leisurely pursuits such as *settai* ("to welcome or entertain guests/clients") in bars or pubs. Golf courses, racetracks, and mahjong parlors along with the many goods and services offered by the sex industry welcomed the Japanese male consumer (Skov and Moeran 31). Hardly any customer's request



was refused; most learned quickly that the world was their oyster as long as they could afford it. Anxious for new ways to quench their sexual desire, many adult males were rendered morally bankrupt when they disregarded the welfare of children by purchasing sex from them. From the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, Japan went from a country that valued the cultural and literary traditions of the past, to one that had generally severed all traditional links and replaced them with new mass forms of entertainment and embraced new ways of life (Schilling 39). The road to monetary wealth had been paved and a "fast-food" lifestyle that catered to instant gratification was soon to follow. The age of overt materialism had arrived.

**Bubbletime and the living is easy: the excessive mentality of wealth**

Plans to continuously develop the country's economy were a priority of the Japanese government throughout the 1970s and 80s. The much heralded 1978 opening of the New Tokyo International Airport ("Narita") created an enormous gateway to Japan and facilitated travel to and from the bustling metropolis of Tokyo. In the grand scale of economic expansion, the opening of the airport was only the tip of the iceberg of what was soon to come.

The following decade ushered in a new era of unsurpassed financial prosperity and plans to develop Japan's infrastructure were multiplying at an accelerated rate. Land prices skyrocketed in Tokyo and real estate investments doubled overnight. The average person who had land holdings in the Tokyo metropolitan area or had invested wisely in the purchase of land in the city could now cash in on their investments and live in the lap of luxury. Credit card

companies were living high off the hog as their valued customers continued to charge millions of yen worth of merchandise. Japanese investors and appraisers believed that land prices in Japan would infinitely continue to increase.

Tokyo became an international financial hub when many Japanese businesses relocated their headquarters in the city. International corporations were also expected to move to Tokyo and this further motivated many real estate firms to set up offices in the Tokyo central business district to fill this projected demand. The yen was strong and gaining value on a daily basis. A strong yen coupled with rising real estate prices provided ample cash for profitable overseas investment. Japanese businessmen made frequent trips overseas (especially to the United States) to invest in property and become stockholders of companies. When many real estate firms acquired land in the United States in 1988, the exchange rate was ¥128 to US\$1.00 (Tsukamoto 1995). The Japanese yen had increased its value against the U.S. dollar approximately eighty percent between 1985 and 1988. This era of abundance was labeled the "Bubble Economy."<sup>14</sup>

This decadent period created such monetary affluence and an overall excessive mentality of wealth that it often lured many men to patronize the "ejaculation industry." When they became bored with "professionals," these same patrons would seek out various forms of "perversion" including sex with teenage female companions/prostitutes. The average *sarariman* now had money to spare and was able to indulge in activities that could be deemed as hedonistic pursuits. Money was no object and instant gratification became readily attainable. If the *sarariman* grew tired of the domestic sex trade and wished to sample sex

internationally, this was entirely possible and encouraged. Sex tours<sup>15</sup> to Korea, Taiwan, and various countries in Southeast Asia were popular in the 1970s and 1980s with reputable travel agencies and national airlines endorsing trips for *sarariman* to sow their wild oats with the women of Asia (Mackie 223-24; Murata 63-64). The yen, being the strongest currency in Asia at that time, could go a long way in countries where the average family could not afford to feed or clothe their children.

These sex tours might be interpreted by some as the second colonization of Southeast Asia as they evoke images reminiscent of Japan's notorious colonial past of military "comfort women" forced into sexual slavery (Mackie 226-29). Japanese men whose reputation as capitalist warriors earned them the label "economic animals" came to be known by a new name, "sex animals" (Murata 64).

**Men's zippers are not the only things breaking open in the 1990s: the bubble bursts**

This decadent era came to an abrupt end when the Bubble Economy collapsed in 1991. When the value of the yen had increased, Japanese export companies closed their factories in Japan and relocated them overseas in countries such as Singapore and Hong Kong where they could take advantage of the favorable exchange rate. In addition, there was a worldwide recession taking place that brought about a sharp decline in office and retail demand, thus, the supply of land and office space began to exceed its demand. Company revenues plummeted in the weakened economy and were no longer able to carry the negative cash flow from their operations. Borrowers began to default on loans

and banks made additional loans for interest payments to protect their clients from bankruptcy. The value of land in Japan had already dropped; therefore, selling property at a price equivalent to what was owed to the bank was impossible. Many real estate companies and small security brokerages went bankrupt; Japanese banks were also in serious financial trouble with the mounting of non-performing loans (Tsukamoto 196). The unemployment rate began to increase steadily, and many were rendered jobless due to corporate restructuring as recession took hold. "Lifetime employment" was quickly becoming a thing of the past especially for medium and small size corporations. Homelessness was also on the rise.

Reality hit hard, and many Japanese men could no longer travel to other nations, much less domestically. The average family, should they wish to travel within Japan, had difficulty paying for tickets to ride the *shinkansen*<sup>16</sup> ("bullet train"). Many Japanese had incurred such huge debts during the Bubble years of extravagant consumer spending that they were faced with being unable to pay their mounting credit card bills. By the summer of 1993, the economy was in serious recession and was threatened with an actual decline in the GNP (Smith 160).

Since the early 1990s, Japan has continued to experience economic recession. In 1997, the prominent Hokkaido Takushoku Bank (McEvoy 186) and Japan's fourth largest broker, Yamaichi Securities Co. (Bremner 104) went bankrupt. Currently teetering on bankruptcy are the big construction company Kumagai Gumi and the retail supermarket chain Daiei ("Japanese Banks" 67).

These tremendous blows to the domestic economy have contributed to a deflation spiral.

Meanwhile, the unemployment rate continues to rise. According to Kunii (110), in the summer of 2001, the unemployment rate reached five percent, which may seem low when compared to North American or European rates, but is significant for Japan. Since unemployment statistics began being collected in Japan in the 1950s, this figure of five percent is the highest unemployment rate recorded for the country. Japan's economy also has a profound influence on neighboring Asian countries. In late 1997 and throughout 1998, Thailand, South Korea, Indonesia, and Malaysia suffered severe economic crisis, from which they are still struggling to recover. Currently, the Japanese government is attempting to support Japanese banks to help write off insolvent loans, however many are skeptical of their traditional economic policy approach (Tsukamoto 197).

The "miracle" of Japanese economic development has been the subject of much speculation over the past fifty years. Japan's accelerated growth throughout the period after World War Two provided competition for the United States, while at the same time giving hope of economic expansion to developing countries as they witnessed Japan's conversion from an indigent to affluent nation. Many hoped to follow the same path Japan took and believed one sure way to do so was to learn the "secrets" of such rapid growth. Countless books were written in an attempt to capture the "essence" of Japanese success<sup>17</sup>. To this day, even after a decade of stagnation, Japanese postwar development continues



to interest economists, historians, politicians, academics and the like who wish to emulate Japan's accelerated rise to success but avert eventual financial ruin.

**The creation of a two-tiered society and the repercussions of high-speed economic growth**

This "extraordinary" economic process that Japan underwent created a two-tiered society with blue-collar workers relegated to the lower tier and *sarariman* relegated to the upper tier. The lower tier ended up supporting the upper tier. In other words, success for some requires failure for others. *Sarariman* were praised as the winners in such an affluent society but the losers/victims were rarely spoken of. Harmful repercussions of tremendous industrial growth were equally ignored and concealed (Kamata 206-11). It is crucial to note that in an allegedly "homogeneous" society not all Japanese enjoy "homogeneity" in success<sup>18</sup>.

Unfortunately, high-speed economic growth and capitalist development resulted in high-speed environmental damage in Japan. During the 1950s, The Chisso Corporation polluted the seas with mercury from their factory output in the town of Minamata, Kyushu. By 1995, there were approximately thirteen thousand victims of "Minamata disease" which affects the central nervous system and can cause convulsions, the impairment of speech, vision, hearing and movement, and in many cases, death (Moore 79). Other factories continued to increase their industrial output and many other forms of environmental degradation ensued. Air, noise, and water pollution were common not only in larger cities but remote locations as well. The Sanrizuka farmers, who owned and worked the land where Narita Airport was forcibly built, protested (fourteen thousand riot troops had to be deployed!) against the excessive noise and air

pollution and were horrified that their livelihood and homes were being destroyed (Moore 352). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the growing industry of nuclear power plants attracted hundreds of *gempatsu jipushi* ("nuclear power plant gypsies" known as such because they drift from plant to plant to perform dirty and dangerous jobs not fit for regular employees). However, these *gempatsu jipushi* were often exploited because their jobs were the most dangerous in the industry; they were continually exposed to high levels of radiation which resulted in the rate of leukemia and other malignant cancers among them being exceptionally high (Tanaka 251-69).

Economic restructuring has also taken a tremendous toll on the citizens of Japan; when mines were closed down due to the shift from dependence on domestic coal to foreign oil for energy in the 1950s, unemployed men went to Sanya in Tokyo and Kamagasaki in Osaka. Sanya is the name of largest gathering place and lodging-house district for casual laborers in Tokyo since the late 1950s and has been referred to as an "internal colony" (de Bary 80) due to its decrepit living conditions and poverty-stricken population. When the steel industry collapsed due to foreign competition, men went to Sanya. Sanya's day laborer population also increased when the shipbuilding industry shut down (Fowler 9-15). Men who are not even able to secure jobs as day laborers often end up homeless and living in *danbôru mura* ("cardboard villages") or *burû manshon* (named for the blue plastic tarp used by inhabitants to cover their dwelling). In the past few years, the police have waged "clean up campaigns" to rid Tokyo of its homeless population. Those found sleeping in cardboard boxes in

Shinjuku and other railway stations were forced to move to Ueno Park, when they became an eye sore in their new location, they were "asked" to move elsewhere<sup>19</sup>.

The vast majority of day laborers are engaged in construction. Many general contracting firms try to keep as many workers off the payroll as possible by subcontracting workers. This steady supply of labor promptly yields workers (foreign and domestic) as needed. Southeast Asian construction workers often coming to Japan illegally are the most easily exploited by being forced to work long hours for paltry wages (Lie 288-92). If they complain about their low wages, then their bosses can threaten to turn them into the authorities for being in Japan illegally, which would result in immediate deportation<sup>20</sup>.

The construction industry is not the only arena in which foreign workers are imported for cheap labor. Many Southeast Asian women are recruited to join the growing "entertainment" industry in Japan. *Yakuza* ("Japanese Mafia") travel as far as Bangkok, Manila, and Rangoon to recruit girls from impoverished families to Japan under the guise of making money as "waitresses" and "dancers." Once they reach Japan, many of these girls have their passports and identification cards confiscated by the *yakuza* for up to three years. They are confined in a brothel and told to work off the "enormous expenses" paid out in order to get them into the country. Due to the language barrier and fear of violent repercussions if they refuse, the women have no choice but to forcibly work as prostitutes and hostesses in the *yakuza*-run sex industry<sup>21</sup>. In 1995, there were over one hundred thousand foreign women working in Japan's sex industry (Murata 63-65). These

examples are all actual reminders of the horrible side effects of rapid economic "progress" that continue even after the bubble has burst.

**From corporate samurai to sexual samurai: the penis replaces the pocket calculator and ballpoint pen**

The *sarariman* has been praised as the force behind the "phenomenal" postwar growth (Japan Travel Bureau 10; Sugiura and Gillespie 236; "The Salaryman's Song" 40). He has long been a subject of fascination for Western scholars wanting to discover why the *sarariman* is such a loyal corporate employee. In chapter three more specific focus will be placed on the corporate socialization of the *sarariman*. Let us now briefly examine what defines the cog in the wheel of industrial development, the *sarariman*. He often commutes anywhere from one to two hours one way by train from the suburbs to his company. Upon reaching work, he has already exhausted a good portion of his energy reserve for the day (Japan Travel Bureau 16-18). Some sales divisions of corporations hold morning gatherings for their salesmen complete with motivational speeches; the situation is reminiscent of preparing soldiers for battle (Japan Travel Bureau 22). Companies with a focus on customer contact have a rigid training policy to teach their employees how to properly bow, greet clients and superiors, speak, and smile (Japan Travel Bureau 39). These new employee education behavior lessons are all part of the indoctrination into the corporation. Some companies even go so far as to send their rookie employees, middle management and top management personnel to training camps where Zen-like discipline is instilled while wearing uniforms which consist of jackets and baseball caps emblazoned with the company's crest (Victoria 118).

The bureaucracy also had a hand in influencing the *sararīman*'s behavior. For a continuous expansion of the Japanese economy, the government introduced a contemporary form of the idea of *messhi hōkō* ("self-sacrifice for the sake of the group"). This fundamental principle requires the subordination of individual lives to the good of the whole. Rejecting this concept results in complete isolation from the group. Essentially all Japanese corporations are founded on this philosophy (Miyamoto 20). The end result of this indoctrination is that each of these men is molded into the ideal *sararīman*: one who is wholly dedicated to the group, subordinates his own needs and desires for the good of the group, is extremely loyal, has respect for hierarchy, and is obedient to his superiors (once again reminiscent of the ideal soldier in the military). Discipline, obedience, and conformity are all embodied in the corporate leaders of present day Japan (Vogel 160-62). One scholar asserts that these men are actually samurai disguised in Western clothing (Victoria 128).

During the days of aggressive economic expansion in the 1980s, the average annual working hours in Japan were 2,104 (Asahi 99) compared to 1,900 in the United States (Short 31). According to the Japan Travel Bureau (27), these men can count on putting in plenty of hours of overtime as it is expected and usually equals about one hundred hours per month. Sometimes they must work on holidays and weekends, which renders them absent fathers and husbands. *Karōshi* became such a serious problem among *sararīman* in the 1990s that a "Center for the Shortening of Working Hours" was established (Short 31).



If these men are unfortunate enough to miss the evening's last train home, then they either must pay the exorbitant taxi fare to return home or try to secure cheap lodging for the night. Some opt to stay in a place called a capsule hotel, with individual rooms so narrow that they resemble coffins.

*Sarariman* have such a harsh schedule that one of the only ways to alleviate their pent-up stress is by drinking with their peers, all the while complaining about their boss (Japan Travel Bureau 28-29). A large portion of their lives, close to forty years, is devoted to the corporation. Young university graduates usually enter the firm upon graduation and stay on until retirement around the age of sixty (Thomas 50-52). However, single-company devotion is not so prevalent among smaller companies. It is interesting to note that there has been an overt transformation of loyalty from the emperor/state in times past to the corporation presently. This is a variation on an old theme, a re-creation of a hierarchical society wherein the father figure is now the head of the corporation, not the head of state.

#### **The portrayal of *sarariman* in comic books, novels, and movies**

The *sarariman* has often been portrayed in an unflattering light by the mass media (Thomas 50). From 1965 to 1991, the Asahi Shimbun (one of Japan's most popular daily newspapers distributed nation-wide) published the popular *manga*, Fuji Santarô, written by Satô Sanpei (himself a former *sarariman*). The comic strip often featured the pitiful *sarariman* cowering in fear of his boss, wincing in shame as his wife berated him, and ogling at young girls in his office and on the subway. The *sarariman* has been made to believe that he should be grateful to the corporation for allowing him to earn a living. Ironically, the reality is that after

years of devotion to the corporation he is rewarded with such burdens as a second mortgage on his house and escalating bills from the cost of his children's education.

Author Genji Keita (also another former *sarariman*) wrote two noteworthy books on the plight of the lowly company employee. Genji's first short story collection contains a tale titled "Taken for a Ride" which likens one working man, in his relationship with a woman, to an obedient dog who sits up and begs. His second short story collection also features various unflattering stories about stressed-out corporate workers. More recently, film director Harada Masato shocked audiences in his internationally acclaimed 1997 movie Baunsu ko Gals<sup>22</sup> with his portrayal of middle-aged *sarariman* as pitiful, morally bankrupt, and depraved sex fiends who take pleasure in buying soiled girls' panties and offer money in exchange for sex with teenage girls. Is this negative press simply a case of the poor *sarariman* being given a bad rap or are his actions really morally reprehensible?

#### **The miracle and all its glory: why economic success breeds moral decline**

In one telling scene in Baunsu ko Gals, Harada reveals the reasons why financial prosperity led to the moral decline of the *sarariman*. In a dimly lit Tokyo bar, a female high school student involved in teenage prostitution is sitting and talking with a member of the *yakuza* in hopes of coming to an agreement that she will not infringe on his turf any longer as one of her friends has already done. The gangster asks her what she does and she tells him that she does not "sell herself" but she goes out with older men to sing *karaoke*<sup>23</sup> (literally "empty

orchestra"), have dinner together and listen to them talk. The gangster asks if all that gets her ¥100,000 (approximately US\$800) per week and she replies that the amount is actually per date. He is astonished and barks at her, "That's robbery!" She explains, "Japanese men these days all want young girlfriends. We don't go out with them because we want to!"

He then asks her to tell him more. "How come you high school girls do so well? Every *yakuza* in Japan wants to know, but there is no one to ask." She explains, "There's nothing special about us. Even in elementary school men are offering you ¥10,000 (US\$80) for a kiss and ¥20,000 (US\$160) to watch them masturbate. I don't know a girl who has not been groped by a *chikan* ("pervert") on the train. That's what this country is like." He then inquires, "What? Perverted men treating women as sex objects?" She replies, "Going after us with money." Frustrated, he asks, "But why? How can you get away with charging ¥100,000 just for *karaoke*?" She exasperatedly explains to him, "Adults these days don't have any sense, they're like children so real children have power." He chimes in, "And they take advantage of the grown ups?" She curtly responds, "Money is everything in this world. I won't kiss you for ¥10,000 but for one million I might. If a man had any sense it would stop there. But there's the guy who will say sure! It's a pretty scary place this world of ours." Although the teenage girl asserts that there is "nothing special" about her and her friends, the prospect that some men might be willing to pay them one million yen for just a kiss and that some girls might be willing to sell their kisses for that much demonstrates the contrary.

The *mizu shōbai*, although affected by the economic recession somewhat, to this day continues to operate in full force throughout Japan; new conditions foster it so there is no reason for it to die out. One journalist has termed Japan a "pornographic culture" of many years in the making that has continually commodified sex (Yunomae 55). Desire is not so easily curbed even while economic hardship looms. The days of Bubble Economy-bred affluence are gone, but the mindset of deserving instant sexual gratification lingers. The need for sexual rest and recreation is apparent in the increasing incidences of middle-aged men soliciting teenage prostitution being apprehended by the police and subsequently reported by the media. In the 1991 film Tokyo Decadence, while hired to take part in a menage à trois with a middle-aged businessman, a call girl discusses finances with her associate, a dominatrix. In awe of her dominant position, she comments that she must be very wealthy due to her profession. The dominatrix replies, "Not really, it's Japan that is wealthy but it's a wealth without pride. This wealth creates anxiety, which drives men to masochism. I've made my living off of these men and I'm proud of it!"

Over the past three decades, stressed out *sararīman* have been seeking comfort in the brothels of Southeast Asian brothels for quite some time. Being one of the richest countries in Asia has had its benefits. The yen is still strong in Southeast Asia and continues to burn a hole in the *sukebei* ("horny") *sararīman*'s pocket. However, at present, the spread of AIDS has become a major threat to the international and domestic sex industry. Many johns are worried about contracting the disease and mistakenly believe that by having sex with a minor it

is safe because she is more likely to be a virgin and therefore "clean" and free from disease. In 1996, a Japanese businessman was arrested for soliciting sex with an eleven-year-old child in Thailand. Since then, four criminal petitions were filed against Japanese nationals who are alleged to have committed sexual offences against children but none of the cases have come to trial in Japan due to reluctance of Japanese authorities (Seabrook 88-91).

So, how exactly do these johns discover the most popular brothels in Asia? Pamphlets and entire books have been published in Japan detailing exact locations, prices, and services offered in brothels in countries such as the Philippines and Thailand<sup>24</sup> (Okura 60-62). What if the john is unwilling to travel outside of the country for sex? Many monthly and weekly magazines in Japan such as Naitai Magazine have been devoted entirely to the splendors of the domestic sex trade and include detailed maps, services offered and female sex workers' vital statistics. Many of the women's trade "specialties" (such as performing fellatio or anal sex), and whether or not they will forgo the usage of condoms are also noted.

In the age of the ever-pervasive Internet, the "ejaculation industry" has not been forgotten. Many current web sites are devoted to rating and ranking the various sexual establishments operating in Japan. One group of Japanese men, the Nihon Pinsaro Kenkyūkai, has taken it upon themselves to create a web site that informs other sexual consumers about the exact locations and offerings of many nation-wide businesses that they have personally patronized.



**If I buy you a cellular phone will you let me be your date?**

One arena in the sex trade that has become popular among middle-aged *sararîman* especially within the past decade has been termed *enjo kôsai* ("compensated dating"). A man who purchases an evening of *kôsai* ("dating") from a female high school student enjoys a range of activities including singing *karaoke*, dining out together, or merely engaging in sexual intercourse in exchange for *enjo* ("financial aid"). *Sararîman* turn to the girls and women of the sex industry in hopes of receiving "sexual healing" which provides them with soothing and comforting relief of a sexual nature. The demands on their lives are high with little room for their own physical and emotional requirements. A means for them to assert their individual needs is to purchase sex from *joshikôsei baishunfu* ("female high school prostitutes") who will willingly share their company and cater to men's whims provided the men compensate them monetarily.

According to Cherry (46-47), in the 1980s, the term *joshidaisei baishunfu* ("female university student prostitutes") was frequently used. These women were portrayed as sex kittens by the media because some were found posing nude in peep shows or prostituting themselves for extra spending money. The press lambasted them for being immoral, obsessed with consumer goods, and often departing on expensive vacations overseas all due to their hefty disposable income. In the 1990s and current decade, the situation has repeated itself, only now the girls are younger and in high school.

There is some uncertainty as to exactly when the phenomenon of *enjo kô sai* began in Japan and what year the term entered into the Japanese lexicon. According to Maruta ("Enjo Kô sai" to Iu Komyunikêshon" 118), the phenomenon of "compensated dating" started in the early 1980s when a place called the "Lover's Bank" incorporated a system whereby potential sex partners could be introduced through a contractual agreement in the privacy of an exclusive club. After that, *tere kura*<sup>25</sup> (abbreviation of "telephone clubs") were invented and an offshoot called "date clubs"<sup>26</sup> soon followed. The next progression came when men were introduced to friends of girls they had dated at telephone or date clubs (often teenage girls still in high school hoping to make some pocket money). Some men even began to boldly approach young girls on the street and ask them out on "paid" dates. In 1999, a survey reported that seventy-five percent of Tokyo's junior and senior high school girls were solicited for sex at least once by older men (Oguni).

The term *enjo kô sai* was inaugurated by the mass media in 1993 when it was discovered that some "criminal acts" (namely the purchase of prostitution) had transpired between middle-aged men and high school girls during their "dates." The usage of the phrase spread so rapidly that it became known all over the country within a matter of months. The Asahi Shimbun was the first newspaper in Japan that began to feature articles on the subject of *enjo kô sai*. Their first article on *enjo kô sai* appeared in September 1994 (Maruta "'Chichi to Musume' no Doramatôrugî" 127). From 1996 to 1997, the mass media featured numerous stories on female high school prostitutes, and *enjo kô sai* involving

teenage girls began to be widely recognized as a serious sociological problem (Maruta "Komyunikêshon" 118).

Even today, the mass media continues to cover stories on the phenomenon, although the majority of reports cite girls' obsessive materialism as the reason for the problem and ignore the participation on the part of the john<sup>27</sup>. This style of male-chauvinistic reporting reflects deep-rooted societal attitudes that it is acceptable for men to dabble in the purchase of prostitution (as long as they keep it private) but female prostitutes should be stigmatized and must assume total responsibility for their "immoral" behavior.

**Receiving sexual satisfaction for the first time in his life: *enjo kôsei* is the answer to a lonely *sararîman*'s dreams**

Many may wonder what could a middle-aged man possibly want with a teenage girl besides sex? In the arms of a high school prostitute, the *sararîman* can find a myriad of sympathy lacking from his own life: solace, an ego-massage, a counseling session, and a physical and emotional release of tension and frustration. However, it is crucial to note that this act of venting pent-up feelings is not reciprocal. Anything more than a one-sided relationship (wherein women absorb all of the tension men want to release and not vice-versa) is not what the john wants and would require a commitment on more than one level. The trials and tribulations of a high school girl's life are the last thing these emotionally needy and lonely men wish to hear. They are unable to return home to pursue an interactive relationship with a woman should they truly desire one; therefore they must turn to prostitutes.

Being with a teenage prostitute may be the first time that a *sarariman* sees himself as receiving genuine sexual satisfaction. The sad reality is that he must pay for it and that requires checking his wallet and personal savings account beforehand to verify if he has enough allowance to be able to afford it. His greatest achievement is helping to expand Japan Inc. by creating the demand for sex with high school girls. He contributes to the domestic economy by giving money to high school girls who in turn, spend it on consumer goods and services. The *sarariman* has succumbed to the demoralization of Bubble Era Japanese men. By creating the demand for sex with female high school students, he must pay for the suppliers to date him. If they agree, only then can he receive sexual and emotional "counseling" which he so desperately needs. In his eyes, money can buy him love since he has learned to obtain comfort with commodified love.

Just how many men and girls are actually participating in *enjo kôsai*? As statistics on the exact number of Japanese johns are nonexistent and "official" government surveys or police reports on the phenomenon of compensated dating are infrequent and vague, there has been some difficulty in obtaining credible numerical data. One of the only statistics published vaguely relating to the unlawful purchase of sex is in the annual Japan Statistical Yearbook (Nihon Tôkei Kyôkai). In 1998, 6,686 people (gender unspecified) in the entire country were arrested for penal code crimes under the category of "moral offences" which infers sex-related offences. The content of the offences is unspecified so the offences could be anything from purchasing sex from adult or child prostitutes, to public indecency or selling pornography. This figure of 6,686 people includes



only those cases reported to the police, subsequent arrests made, and then cleared of charges (Nihon Tôkei Kyôkai 762). It is important to note that these are highly underestimated figures because due to the clandestine nature of the purchase of sex, many of the transactions involving prostitution are never reported to the police and or the johns evade capture. The only other statistic published which relates to the unlawful purchase of sex is in 1999, sixty-two people (gender unspecified) in the entire country were jailed or placed in detention homes for violating the anti-prostitution law. The category of "violating the anti-prostitution law" does not specify whether the purchase of sex was with a minor or an adult (Nihon Tôkei Kyôkai 773).

In recognizing the limitations of the few reported figures and the overall deficiency of credible statistics and data on johns, it was necessary to refer to alternative sources when conducting my research. Film, television programs, newspaper and magazine surveys as well as individual authors<sup>28</sup> interviewing teenage girls involved in the practice of teenage prostitution offered practically the only "concrete" evidence on the subject.

One high school girl in Tokyo reports that out of one hundred of her female friends and acquaintances, half of them are currently involved in *enjo kôsai* (Maruta "Enjo Kôsai Josei no Ruikeiron" 191). In another case, an eighteen-year-old high school girl in Kobe had over one hundred clients and thirty of them were strictly sexual relationships (Maruta "Chichi to Musume" 132-33). In the summer of 1996, the Kanagawa prefectural police arrested forty male clients aged twenty-four to fifty-nine for paying for sex with underage girls. In the fall of



1997, sixteen out of one hundred girls surveyed in Shibuya said that they engaged in *enjo kôsai* as their part-time job (Taiji 40-41). Approximately five percent<sup>29</sup> (Suemasu 11) of 2.1 million high school girls (Nihon Tôkei 694) in Japan may be engaging in *enjo kôsai*. Therefore, based on this number, the range of possible estimates available for johns appears quite high. For example, if each of the girls engaging in compensated dating had just one john the number would equal 105,000 men.

This activity is not limited to just a few cities in Japan; *enjo kôsai* takes place in big cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and Sapporo, as well as in small towns throughout the country. The National Police Agency reports that the "official"<sup>30</sup> number of girls engaged in *enjo kôsai* and placed into police custody for "deviant sexual acts with the intent of earning money for fun" reached an all time peak in 1996 at 2,517 (Japan Keisatsuchô 5; sec. 3, ch. 2). Although the media can be blamed for its sensationalistic coverage of the controversial topic, the fact remains that *enjo kôsai* is a current social problem that continues to plague Japan.

**Getting connected: how the girls obtain their customers and how the johns seek out their "dates"**

Many of the high school girls have developed tremendous business acumen even at such a young age. Constantly being in such high demand, girls soon realized that potential sugar daddies would pay any amount of money just to be in their company. Friends introduce other friends to the men they have dated, or to the inner workings of the *tere kura*. Setting a date is relatively easy using one of these clubs since there is such an abundance of male clients calling in on a nightly basis and the girls never have to pay to use any of the services. If a client wants a

change of pace he can patronize a plethora of other telephone clubs of which he has discovered the numbers on *pinku chirashi*<sup>31</sup> ("pink flyers") or tissue handed out on the street (see Figures 1 and 2). Recent variations on the telephone clubs that have become popular are *dengon daiyaru* ("voice mail telephone sex line") and *tsû shotto daiyaru* ("one-on-one telephone sex line")<sup>32</sup>.

In *Baunsu ko Gals*, one scene depicts two teenage girls standing and giggling in a public phone booth while listening to messages left by male clients on voice messaging system. Some of the messages left include "Is there a junior high or high school girl out there who wants her own cell phone?" "Is anyone interested in a *sararîman* in his 40s?" "I'm looking for a girl and I'm willing to pay ¥100,000 just to go out for dinner." Many girls already have cellular phones or beepers either given to them as presents by their male clients or bought with their own money for business<sup>33</sup>.

Many johns are not willing to go to the expense of buying cellular phones for their favorite girl. In Japan, cellular phones are often available free of charge provided the customer subscribes to a specific calling plan. The actual expense is incurred when calls are made and or received on the phone. The calls are charged at a high per-minute-rate. In addition to varying degrees of willingness to spend large amounts of money on their dates, not all johns have the same preferences either. Different men patronize different services. Some just call telephone clubs strictly for stimulating conversation not leading to a date. Others might purchase child pornography in the form of videos or magazines<sup>34</sup>.

According to Yunomae (55), some men cater to their sexual fetishes without having to interact physically with the object of their affection. The purchase of soiled school girls' underwear or used clothing items from *burû sérâ* (abbreviation of "bloomers" and "sailor suits" which refers to uniforms mandatory in junior high and sometimes high school) is an acceptable substitute for physical contact with a teenager for some men. Taking this into consideration, the focus of this paper is to show the connection between men "healing" on a sexual level which requires physically being with a teenage girl in order to do so.

Engaging in *enjo kôσαι* is not cheap. There are a range of prices and activities to suit every customer's needs. In 1994, a girl in Tokyo accepted ¥30,000 (approximately US\$240) for just one date with a client. Another man offered a girl ¥50,000 (US\$400) per date if she agreed to see him more than once (Maruta "Chichi to Musume" 132). One girl who currently has four clients states that she makes anywhere from ¥200,000 (US\$1,600) to ¥300,000 (US\$2,410) per month. A *sararîman* regularly paid for a high school girl to come to his apartment once every two weeks and gave her between ¥50,000 to ¥100,000 per date depending on the nature of the activity involved (Hayami 9). Four high school girls went out with two forty-year-old men for *karaoke* and each received ¥6,000 (US\$48). For comparison, what a teenager can make in thirty to fifty hours of part-time work at a regular job is the equivalent of a single *enjo kôσαι* encounter. The hourly wage for a part-time job is approximately ¥600 (US\$4.80) to ¥700 (US\$5.60) (Maruta "Komyunikêshon" 121). One successful seventeen-year-old made one million yen per month just by engaging in *enjo kôσαι* (Inoue

140). A high school girl in Hokkaido mentions that she makes upwards of ¥50,000 per day going on dates and all of her friends are doing the same (Sawada 76).

One might ask just what type of man is willing to pay so much for "date" with a young girl? The answer is surprising. The age range of men engaging in *enjo kôsai* is between nineteen to eighty, with the majority of men being in their 30s and 40s (Maruta "'Chichi to Musume'" 128). The men have various professions that are as diverse as doctors, lawyers, judges, university professors, high school teachers, businessmen, elite company workers, farmers, policemen, dentists, and even *yakuza*. It is interesting to note, however, that the majority of clients are either *sararîman* or small business owners (Sawada 44-45; Maruta "'Chichi to Musume'" 128).

The media frequently publicizes cases of high profile men being caught in the act. In May 2001, a Tokyo High Court Judge was arrested for having sex with a fourteen-year-old girl ("Tokyo Kôsai Hanji"). In June of the same year, a Chiba policeman was sentenced to fourteen months in prison for paying a high school girl for sex on numerous occasions ("Chiba Policeman Gets Prison Term"). In 1998, an elite businessman was sued in Yokohama for blackmailing his high school girlfriend with naked photographs of her taken while they engaged in paid "dates" ("'Enjo Kôsai' de Kokusosareta Erîto Shain" 155). In 1997, a forty-four-year-old dentist in Kanagawa prefecture was arrested for having sex with a high school girl (Sawada 45). One repentant middle-aged *sararîman* did not wait to get caught; instead he wrote an autobiographical account of his experiences over

the years with *enjo kôsai* in a magazine so that others could learn from his mistakes (Hara 212).

Judging by the number of high school girls involved in teenage prostitution, the diversity of the johns, and the frequency of the reported cases over the past decade, it is safe to assume that this is not fly by night phenomenon affecting an insignificant number of people. Educators in Japan were so concerned about the increasing incidences of teenage prostitution in their country that sixty-one thousand copies of a handbook on *enjo kôsai* were required to be reproduced due to popularity among schools and teachers ("Enjo Kôsai" ni tsuite Kangaeru tame no Handobukku). Now that there has been some awareness reached on the current situation of teenage prostitution in Japan, it is crucial to explore which factors influence a Japanese *sararîman* to become a john.



Figure 1: *Pinku Chirashi*

広島inスポット

選び抜かれた素人  
女性の集まりです。  
プレイスポットは  
当店できまり！  
絶対の自信有り

エッチが大好き  
本気で燃えます  
人妻・未亡人

セクシーでスタイル  
抜群の美人OL

カワイイ女子大生

245♥3013

生キス・生尻  
二回戦OK

This *pinku chirashi* is public knowledge and was taken from a phone booth in downtown Hiroshima in May 2001. Flyers advertising telephone sex lines are plentiful and often posted or left in pay phone booths for people to take. Sports and entertainment newspapers (targeted for male consumers) which cover baseball and other sports, gambling such as horseracing or motorboat racing, and entertainment news on local celebrities are prevalent in Japan and also include *pinku chirashi* as a feature offered for their readers. It is illegal to advertise sex with minors so all girls "appear" or are advertised to be over eighteen years of age. The text reads: Hiroshima "in-spot." The gathering place for naked women who like to play. The "play spot" is right in the actual store. Cute female university students, sexy and stylish beautiful "Office Ladies," and housewives that really like to have sex are all available. French kissing, fellatio without condoms, and ejaculating twice is ok!

Figure 2: Tissue



This pack of tissue advertising a telephone club is public knowledge and was distributed to passers-by on the street in downtown Tokyo in March 2001. Prostitution is “technically” illegal in Japan, although by not labeling it as such many are able to escape prosecution. Massage parlors only offer “massage” and telephone clubs simply offer “conversation” which may lead to a “date,” therefore business such as these are conveniently ignored by the authorities. The Prostitution Prevention Law enacted in May 1956 states that “intercourse with an unspecified other party for compensation or for the promise of compensation” is illegal and “no person shall commit prostitution or be the client of prostitution” (Against Prostitution appendix i). The text on the tissue reads: Telephone Club “Ring Ring House.” You must be over eighteen years of age to use this service. Do not use this telephone club for purposes of soliciting *enjo kōsai* or for gaining a profit. For those that want telephone sex, dial 0120-00-3366; for those that want the secret “two shot corner” (one-on-one), dial 0120-186-186. If you are calling from a cellular phone or are out of the free calling area (within Tokyo), dial 03-3462-4554.

## CHAPTER TWO: EDUCATING TARÔ AT HOME AND IN SCHOOL

### The initial development of "johnhood"

This chapter attempts to establish that family and the educational system are the two key institutions that contribute to men becoming johns and seeking comfort in teenage prostitutes in Japan. The pressures of daily family life as well as the influence of the mandatory educational system on a child's psyche are suspected to have a profound effect on the behavior patterns of an adult Japanese male. In order to understand fully the nature of a john's life and how he came to be a john, it is necessary to examine his early developmental years and upbringing. It is quite unlikely that men simply wake up one day and find themselves choosing to purchase sex due to an inherent predisposition; the patronage of prostitutes is likely to be the result of socialization since early childhood.

Childhood development and parental influence is not simply a one-sided affair wherein an absentee father can be blamed for all the ills of his children. Both parents are responsible for and have an effect on their child's upbringing. Mothers have just as much responsibility (if not much more so in the postwar era) in bringing up their children as fathers, even though mothers have often been demonized by the media as being completely accountable if something goes awry with their children. Within the past fifty years, *sarariman* fathers have been able to avoid much of their responsibility in raising children due to the fact that they have been so busy contributing to the "economic miracle." In this case, perhaps it

can be said that in the postwar era the Japanese mostly originate from de facto "single" mother families.

Regardless of the composition of the family, it is crucial to note that patterns of behavior are not instilled in children overnight. Rather, a child's development is a lengthy process that spans a number of years and continues well on into maturity.

#### **Academic credentials and gender determine your worth**

Japanese society has earned the reputation of being a *gakureki shakai* ("academic credential society") wherein a person's academic background is regarded as an important attribute that determines his or her worthiness (Sugiura and Gillespie 171). However, in the case of Japanese women academic credentials are irrelevant, as the "normal" course of a woman's life is to marry and have children instead of devoting herself to a career. Sometimes, if a woman does have a good education, it can be the case that her education might allow her to marry into a higher social class.

When applying for jobs later on as an adult, potential employers consider the name of the applicant's university to be extremely significant. It is a common practice for large corporations to directly recruit their employees from a pool of new graduates of prestigious universities. Often, in a student's final year of university *shûshoku katsudô* ("job hunting") commences wherein company interviews are conducted under fierce competition. Not wearing the right attire or having the right haircut can be interpreted as being considered a non-conformist, which results in rejection from an employer. Examination periods are not over

after university; some corporations require written exams be taken by job-applicants (Japan Travel Bureau 32-36). A well-educated, carefully selected employee is the prime recruit for a corporation and the envy of many due to his privileged placement (Thomas 50). Often, a person's academic background is regarded as more important than fitting the specific requirements of the job description. This preference for distinguished academic credentials occurs in hiring employees not only in corporations but in the government as well. While in office, former Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro directed that more graduates of other universities be accepted into the government. His decision came as a result of realizing that a disproportionately large number of Tokyo University (one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Japan) graduates were in high levels of the bureaucracy (Sugiura and Gillespie 171).

In order to ensure marketability in adulthood, many Japanese mothers push for their sons to enter an *ichiryû kô* ("first rate school") sometimes as early as kindergarten. When solid academic credentials pave the way to almost guaranteed employment with a reputable firm later on, attending a suitable school from an early age will secure a child's bright future ahead. Attending a reputable kindergarten facilitates entrance into a first rate elementary school and then on to a top-notch junior and senior high school.

Sons' education is considered to be more critical as compared to daughters', although this does not apply to families with daughters only. A son is expected to become the breadwinner of his own family upon reaching adulthood and consequently needs a four-year university education behind him in order to



enter into a big corporation. Better education for a son means better career prospects and more marketability for marriage (Okano and Tsuchiya 76).

In the 1980s, ninety-five percent of four-year university entrants in Japan were boys, however, according to the Ministry of Education, in 2000, the figure had decreased to sixty-five percent. Since the early 1980s, girls continue to comprise ninety percent of the student body attending two-year colleges in Japan. If girls get the chance to attend university, then they are almost always concentrated in the traditionally female disciplines of literature, education, and home economics (Fujimura-Fanselow 165).

Daughters simply do not have as many career prospects as sons do despite the recent introduction of "equal opportunity" legislation. The most to which they can aspire is to attend a two-year college, work as a glorified tea server in a corporation and then marry and bear children, hopefully all before the ripe old age of thirty (Condon 183-86). In the recent past, the expected age for women to marry was twenty-five. Anyone not married by that age was given the label of leftover "Christmas cake" which implied that after December 25, they would become stale and unwanted (Cherry 53). Even today, women's education in Japan continues to primarily prepare them to be better wives and mothers, which is in line with the Meiji Era philosophy of *ryōsai kenbo no kyōiku* (education to form girls into good wives and wise mothers). Consequently, the curriculum at the majority of junior colleges focuses on preparing girls for marriage and homemaking (Fujimura-Fanselow 166).

Parents regard their son's education as one of the most important responsibilities in his life. Aside from pushing daughters to enter reputable women's colleges and universities, parents invest in their daughters' "cultural" education and spend money on expensive pursuits such as piano and flower arranging lessons so that their daughters are marketable as brides. The preferential treatment of boys sends negative messages to girls early on that they are not as worthy and must therefore accept their lot in life of relegation to the domestic sphere. This message also allows girls to be relaxed about their education and careers since what is required of them is to "take care of men."

Gender roles are instilled at an early age both in school and in the home. Based on their own notions of femininity and masculinity, many Japanese parents raise their daughters and sons differently. Most mothers and fathers believe that their children should be socialized to acquire gender specific roles and want to ensure that *onnarashisa* ("femininity") and *otokorashisa* ("masculinity") are well defined (Okano and Tsuchiya 77). "Positive" traits associated with femininity are being kind, gentle, polite, submissive, and graceful (Cherry 32). Conversely, boys are taught to be stoic, unemotional, and models of discipline.

This type of education is taught not only in school but after school as well. Sports occupy a major part of adolescence and it is on the baseball field or in the martial arts arena that junior team players must clean the floors and scrub toilets in order to "train their spirit" and develop their masculinity. The job of doing the team's laundry belongs to a woman (Bornoff 105-07). Boys even learn to speak a different language from girls; they have their own masculine personal pronouns

such as *boku* and *ore* (both terms for "I") and speak "tough guy" slang, which is unacceptable for girls to use. If a boy were overheard using female speech he would be ridiculed and thought of as effeminate in a negative sense (Cherry 38).

Gender segregation exists from the start of school but by junior high school, as children prepare for entrance into a suitable high school, the stratification has intensified and girls find themselves removed from the competition with boys. The gender socialization that takes place in school becomes important because this shapes how *sarariman* will interact with women later on in life. The compliant OL ("office lady") and authoritative *sarariman* relationship carries over from junior high and high school days into the corporation. Boys are taught to treat girls differently in order to account for their "frailty" and "emotional nature." With regard to sex, female purity is seen as virtuous. Girls are supposed to maintain their chastity during their school years; if a girl chooses to remain a virgin, she is neither teased nor subjected to peer pressure. However, if a girl decides to lose her virginity and or engage in sexually promiscuous behavior, this would lead to stigmatization and the label of being "easy."

Confucianist ethics of the past influenced how Japanese women should be viewed, and that still carries over today. Traditional precepts dictate that in childhood a girl obeys her father, in marriage her husband, and in old age her sons. Generally, women are supposed to be humble, nurturing, domesticated, and servile; a girl is not considered a woman until she marries (Condon 3). Many people might view high school prostitutes as "bad girls" who reject these

traditional ethics in favor of their own. Conversely, it might be said that these teenage prostitutes are liberating themselves from patriarchal Confucian precepts that bind women in restrained roles.

Boys are not free from expectations either. Being predestined to be the main wage earner comes with pressure to achieve and follow in their fathers' footsteps and attain success. To "do the right thing" means becoming a corporate man. Any aspirations outside of the business realm are highly discouraged except for becoming a bureaucrat and or entering other esteemed professions such as lawyers and medical doctors. Mothers primarily see to it that their sons pursue the path to success.

#### **Education mamas and anxiety-ridden kids**

The *kyôiku mama* ("education mama") is often portrayed by the media as striving for vicarious success by driving her children to get good grades (Cherry 78). Although they lack involvement, fathers do have some interest. Fathers have a large stake in the education of their sons since the father of a school dropout would not be in a favorable position in terms of his promotion in the company.

A strict *kyôiku mama* will ensure that her son gets good grades and passes the entrance exams required at a reputable high school and a university. One way for a student to prepare for the entrance exams is to attend *juku* ("cram school") or *yobikô* ("preparatory school") which are privately run by individuals or corporations. According to the Tokai Bank 2000 Expenditure on Education for Children report, *juku* enrolment reached its peak in 1987 when 69.7 percent of all junior high school students (grades seven to nine) attended. It is important to

note, however, that these private cram schools are business ventures, and some children are unable to attend without adequate funding from parents. For many, studying after hours provides them with the added edge needed to become victorious in academic competition.

Fierce rivalry develops among classmates early on as children are under intense pressure to perform well. Competition becomes a regular part of life. Japan's reputation for being a *gakureki shakai* adds further stress to a child's life and contributes to the stratification of their society by subjecting its members to being constantly rated (White The Japanese Educational Challenge 74). Intense entrance exams measure students' failures and successes and determine the social hierarchy. Academic achievement becomes the basis to rank students.

Corporations are the largest employers of university graduates in Japan, although employment at major corporations is limited. When hiring new recruits, the major corporations adopted a policy of preferring graduates of first rate or prestigious universities. Most young men hope for employment at a large corporation, therefore, rivalry begins at an early age as they compete to enter a distinguished university at the top of the educational ladder (Amano 119). It is not simply a coincidence that corporations financially back cram schools and actively recruit graduates from top universities. Big business certainly has a vested interest in the scholastic achievements of future employees as they will become part of the corporate family later on. What better way to guarantee obedient employees than to hand pick them before they actually start work?



Fierce competition at annual entrance exams to enter prestigious universities led to the phenomenon called *jukensensô* ("examination wars") later termed *shiken jigoku* ("examination hell"). Mothers often help to prepare their sons for the exams and place them on a very strict schedule with little or no leisure time (Lebra 343-44). Well before examination periods approach, both teachers and parents advise children that their main focus in life must be to prepare for and succeed in passing their exams. Already imbedded in their psyche and instilled as part of their social and emotional development, children are pressured to *gaman suru* (endure hardship) and *ganbaru* (persist or persevere) while experiencing the challenges of school life (White Japanese Educational Challenge 27).

Upon reaching the end of junior high school, the months of exhausting effort to prepare for the examination result in less and less free time for students and alienation from their peers. The struggle to rise to the top renders many children physically and mentally fatigued and demoralized (White Japanese Educational Challenge 74). Some children who do not pass entrance exams commit suicide not wanting to bring further shame on their families or to escape their tormented existence (White Japanese Educational Challenge 2). There is no time for a child to be able to enjoy being a child without all the emotional baggage and responsibility of an adult. Japanese children are never allowed to be free from competition, total scholastic commitment, and stress.

### *Amae* and the lenient years

The only time a child is allowed to enjoy their childhood is from birth until they enter the compulsory educational system, with the exception of those children who are thrown into educational competition at the kindergarten level. Japanese mothers and their newborn children form close bonds and a great deal of freedom and self-indulgence is lavished on babies (Benedict 254). Mothers instruct their offspring at a tender age about interpersonal relationships. The difference between their special relationship and that of others is that there is certain behavior permitted only between mother and child. For example, if the child rebels or misbehaves, a mother endeavors to protect her relationship with her child rather than give criticism or force the issue at the expense of alienating her child (White Japanese Educational Challenge 96).

The notion of *amae* (the emotional dependence of child to mother or subordinate to superior) is instilled at a young age and deeply rooted within the Japanese psyche. Psychiatrist Doi Takeo (1967) defines *amae*<sup>35</sup> firstly as "the craving of a newborn child for close contact with its mother and...the desire to deny the fact of separation that is an inevitable part of human existence...." As part of the process of forming a strong emotional bond, a mother encourages her child to need her as the object of gratification. Mothers maintain the intimacy of the mother-child relationship by indulging their children and by explicitly instructing them in the distinction between behavior appropriate to such an "indulged" relationship and that appropriate to the outside world. An example of this would be when the child refuses to carry out her reasonable demands, the

mother simply threatens to withdraw affection and indicates that she has been hurt. Ultimately, it is the mother that is responsible for gradually shaping the child's behavior toward greater maturity (White Japanese Educational Challenge 98).

Other family members such as older sisters and brothers are also taught to indulge their younger siblings and often cater to them in an effort to help their mother and gain responsibility. However, fathers are reserved a very different role than the rest of the family. They must be shown respect and never subjected to the temper tantrums that the child is able to get away with in front of the mother. In line with true Confucian ideology, fathers must instill the family hierarchy as the unquestionable patriarch. Currently, this precept has been disputed since fathers today have lost their authority.

A final interesting point to note in the hierarchy of the Japanese family structure is that mothers, not fathers, are the strict disciplinarians (Benedict 263-65). This will be revisited later on in some grown men's lives when the early days of withstanding motherly discipline are manifested into sexual desire and fetishes. This may explain the popularity of S&M clubs in Japan among many male patrons. Such patrons seeking "punishment" doled out by a dominatrix enjoy the ever popular staple of the trade, the "spanking service," and the occasionally requested "mature-woman specials" wherein an elderly hostess assumes the role of the unforgiving mother (Constantine 109-17).

As far as education in the home, Japanese mothers do educate their toddlers but mostly in an informal way. Generally, mothers spend endless hours

engaging in cooperative activities with their children such as reading, drawing, and playing counting and writing games. A mother's instruction usually involves activities through which she can actively engage with her child. Most mothers train their children in school-related activities during the preschool years to ensure that their children receive the foundation for successful scholastic careers ahead of them. Most mothers in urban areas begin to teach their children at the age of three onwards to read and write the phonetic alphabet. By the time they enter first grade, the majority of children can usually count to one hundred and calculate simple mathematical problems involving amounts under ten. They are also able to sing or recite various songs and poems. These achievements coupled with the fact that the child develops such skills before entering school are all due to the tremendous efforts of the mother (White Japanese Educational Challenge 96-97).

Japanese mothers are motivated by competition with their peers, i.e. other mothers; keeping up with the Jones's drives mothers to ensure that their child succeeds. Sociologist Merry White points out (Japanese Educational Challenge 97-98) that this agenda of intensive home learning and interaction at such an early age is part of a mother's fully conscious strategy to improve her child's chances in future competitive examinations. Therefore, it can be said that from a very early age on, a Japanese boy (more so than a girl as he will be the future breadwinner) is constantly being molded for future success and oriented toward reaching high goals.



**Japan's educational system: creating the myth of homogeneity**

One of Japan's many claims to fame is achieving the highest literacy and numeracy rates in the world. Close to one hundred percent of their population is literate (Okano and Tsuchiya 4; White Japanese Educational Challenge 2). While this is certainly a commendable accomplishment, it is important to recognize that along with tremendous academic achievement come serious consequences. Let us briefly examine the organization of Japanese education.

The postwar Japanese school system operates on the compulsory 6-3-3 system (six years of elementary, three of junior high and three of high school) as prescribed by the 1947 School Education Law (Okano and Tsuchiya 33). Every class has its own fixed classroom in which students take all their courses except for ones requiring practical training or laboratory work. Public elementary and junior high schools provide lunch on a standardized menu, and it is eaten in the same fixed classroom. Elementary school children are differentiated by their big and shiny school bags; girls have red backpacks and boys have black ones. Almost all junior high and most high schools require students to wear school uniforms which for boys are fashioned after nineteenth century German naval academy uniforms (in black complete with brass buttons) and for girls navy blue "sailor suits" with skirts and matching tops (Bornoff 103). Classes with mostly the same content are taught throughout the entire country as the ministry of education closely supervises school curriculum and all textbooks.<sup>36</sup>

Sugiura and Gillespie (200) state that in Japan "as a result, through uniformity and homogeneity, a high standard of education becomes possible." If



the above statement is based simply on Japan's literacy rates then certainly a high standard of education exists. However, if we are to examine more closely the repercussions of a "homogeneous" and "uniform" education, then these high standards become questionable.

Bureaucrats introduced an educational program in Japan based on the principle of group orientation where all Japanese should look, think, and act alike; there is no room for individual differences, and creativity is stifled. Japanese psychiatrist Miyamoto Masao (21-22) asserts that from a psychological point of view, this goal of achieving absolute "homogeneity" in a society is clearly an illusion. Independence means that a person expresses his or her thoughts openly, develops the capability to say no under pressure to conform, and challenges the status quo; the principle of group orientation prevents independence and arrests emotional development at the adolescent stage.

According to a former *sarariman*, the education and socialization process in Japan simply do not equip its citizens with the intellectual and spiritual resources to question and challenge the status quo (Iwashita 24). If creativity is asserted no matter how subtly, then it is interpreted as a direct assault on uniformity and imposed societal values and results in ostracism from the group. Ostracism and bullying are strong psychological tools implemented to force children and adults alike into submission.

**Bullying: molding boys into masochists so they can fit in at the corporation**

As if alienation from their peers due to a strict schedule is not enough to contend with, many boys must withstand verbal harassment from both classmates

and senior students, which often turns into physical bullying. Sometimes suicide becomes an escape for a tormented youth. According to Okano and Tsuchiya (195-96), the first media coverage of suicide due to bullying in Japan was in 1986 when a student left a suicide note stating that he could no longer withstand school bullying. From 1994 to 1995, eleven suicide cases were reported in the media and bullying was considered to be a serious social problem. It is interesting to note that while the gender of the children who have been bullied is unspecified in the statistics cited in Okano and Tsuchiya's book, all of the case studies they conducted on bullied youth are boys.

Numerous government and academic publications began to appear in the late 1980s that investigated the causes of bullying in Japanese society. The Ministry of Education has been collecting data on incidences of school bullying since 1985. In 1985, seventy percent of junior high schools in Japan experienced bullying as a problem and 55,066 incidences were reported. In 1995, sixty percent of junior high schools experienced bullying but the reported figure increased to 60,096 incidences. It is important to note, however, that these figures may be a gross underestimation because the Ministry of Education surveys covered only those incidences that individual schools identified and reported to local education boards (Okano and Tsuchiya 196-97).

The most widespread forms of bullying are teasing, verbal threats, money extortion, and exclusion from the group, all of which can potentially escalate into physical violence. As a child gets older and enters into junior high and high school, the bullying tends to move away from exclusion from the group and is

replaced by physical violence. Children that experienced bullying reported that the perpetrators were not all enemies but sixty percent were "friends" or "ordinary classmates." It is not uncommon for the bullied students and the bullies to trade places. At least half of the bullied students surveyed sought "revenge." Acting out their pent-up anger on another weaker student seemed to momentarily satisfy this urge (Okano and Tsuchiya 196-98).

A desire for those that have been bullied to seek "revenge" can surface later on in life. In the movie Baunsu ko Gals, one telling scene demonstrates the power of retribution. A middle-aged *sarariman* is furious that a high school prostitute has attempted to swindle him out of his money by unsuccessfully using a stun gun on him to render him unconscious so she can steal his wallet. The man is so enraged that it seems as if all his years of pent-up resentment from being victimized by his peers and society are released in a matter of minutes on the unsuspecting girl. He brutally beats her by using his knowledge of karate to knock her unconscious and she is then seen being taken away on a stretcher with a bloody, swollen face and black eye. When the police arrive on the scene the man is visibly agitated and unapologetic and tells the police officer taking the report that this is a matter of "self-defense" and he is the actual "victim" in this crime.

Let us examine more closely how much of an impact bullying has on the psyche of Japanese boys and subsequently, men. Psychiatrist Doi (134-38) mentions that in a collectivized society such as Japan, methods of bullying which include total isolation from the group are so threatening and so feared that a person will endure almost anything in order to belong to the accepted group. The

individual is submersed so completely in the group that there is no self; blind loyalty to the group leads a person to be silent about his differences with the group; making the group's interest harmonize with his own is the individual's ultimate goal. Therefore, there is an obligation to belong to the group even at the cost of the total obliteration of the "self."

Essentially, bullying is a key tool for forcing individuals to accept the logic of the group. Conformity is enforced when the entire group is required to join in the bullying of a deemed outcast. Bullying bonds groups members together. The bullied tend to remain outcasts regardless, and as a result, many refuse to go to school or end up committing suicide. Japanese-style bullying uses the threat of ostracism to attack people's deep psyche and arouse anxiety. Psychological pressure is exercised in many ways and deals the victim a heavy blow. The younger the victim is when he is bullied the larger the scar it leaves.

However, bullying plays an important role in Japanese society as it is a rite of passage that earns the victim admission to the inner circle. Tormentors taunt their victims with sayings such as "you will find yourself alone" or "if you leave the group you will not be able to sustain yourself anywhere" and these prospects are a fate worse than death for some (Miyamoto 142-47).

Doi (136) mentions that generally, the Japanese dislike confrontation and a conflict of opinion and prefer instead an appearance of consensus when decisions must be made. This "mob psychology" means that the individual can not resist and must blindly follow the group, which can be equated with servility to the masses. The introduction of conformity in school teaches children that the



subordination of individual lives for the good of the whole is a necessary part of society; in essence, all Japanese belong to a single group so they end up sacrificing their personal lives. The rejection of this concept of self-sacrifice results in total isolation. The fear of ostracism from the group instills such anxiety that the threat of removal from the group has a strong controlling influence on the behavior of individuals. The Japanese are educated so that even if they are frustrated or unhappy, they will resign themselves to the situation; this type of education is very meaningful since no protestation means it is easier to propagate the philosophy of collectivity (Miyamoto 20-21).

Miyamoto (139) states that Japanese collectivism encourages bullying; those that lack sadistic tendencies are bullied by the group who want to see all their members acquire the same degree of sadism. One of the rewards for those members that support the group's bullying is to receive vicarious pleasure in seeing another suffer at the hands of a bully. The act of bullying serves to test the extent of the newcomer's potential sadistic or masochistic tendencies. Some group members may secretly sympathize with the bullied victim but no one dares to speak up or put a stop to it because they are afraid that if they do, they might become victims themselves.

Newcomers in the corporation earn recognition as full-fledged members of the company group based not on their abilities but on the extent to which they become others' hands and feet demonstrating their willingness to drive themselves physically. Superiors are often verbally abusive to their subordinates who are forced to endure this harsh treatment. The newcomers dutifully show



their superiors the extent and capability of their masochism, which sometimes transcends the corporate sphere and carries over to the arena of sexual desire. It is not difficult to extend such a socialization to the popularity of the S&M clubs where the majority of clients are masochistic men looking to be reprimanded (Miyamoto 140).

Miyamoto (149) further asserts that the fact that Japanese society condones bullying even among adults results in a general mindset of sado-masochism wherein the sadists take pleasure in the pain of others and masochists receive gratification from being subordinated and tortured. The masochism Miyamoto refers to here is a form of psychological dependency that does not include orgasm or sexual gratification. According to Miyamoto, a man who engages in bullying plunges himself into world of "sexual perversion" and "abnormal psychology." If this is true, then perhaps it is safe to assume that most Japanese men are potential perverts because their socialization involves bullying in a wide scale. Is it any wonder that *chikgn* on trains are so prevalent in Japan? Those men that do not wish to or can not afford to pay for sex can simply indulge in groping women on crowded public transport to fulfill their fantasies anonymously.

The subjection to isolation and ostracism result in a cycle of reward and punishment that lays the foundation for a man's subsequent interest in the ejaculation industry. This vicious cycle can lead to a certain corrupted and uncertain view of oneself, others, and human relations in general that may be conducive to "johnhood." Alienation from others, which is a form of punishment,

can be relieved by purchasing sex as this constitutes a reward. Throughout their lives, hardly anyone praises boys or men for their achievements so becoming a john means that a man will receive sexual and emotional rewards. The "johnization" of *sararîman* can be considered as a product of the ubiquitous three "I's": *ijime* ("bullying"), *ibiri* ("abuse" or "harsh treatment"), and *iyagarase* ("harassment"). Most *sararîman* are under such a tremendous amount of pressure from society, their families, and the corporation and must constantly long for praise and approval from others, which they almost never receive. This is another reason why *enjo kôsai* is particularly attractive to a man lacking in confidence. By paying a girl to flatter his ego a *sararîman* is able to receive the commendation he so desperately needs.

#### **While dad is away his son develops a mother complex**

In the past, Japanese fathers were instrumental in rearing their children; in fact, Edo Period child disciplining manuals were addressed to men. Male children of the samurai class were their mother's responsibility until their fathers had their turn at taking charge of a boy's cultural upbringing by introducing him to literature and martial arts. The delegation of responsibilities in the domestic sphere began to change when the Meiji Period ushered in the *ryôsai kenbo* state ideology that established clearly defined husband and wife roles. Furthermore, after World War Two, industrialization saw the emergence of a new middle class husband's role confirmed as the breadwinner and the wife as guardian of the home (Jolivet 64).

Presently, most fathers have almost nothing to do with their children's upbringing and education. The end of World War Two saw the father figure rapidly becoming less and less respected; one suspected reason is that the wartime defeat dealt a huge blow to the traditional morality of patriarchal Confucianist authority. The term *oyaji* ("that old man") has become derogatory (Doi 153). Furthermore, in the media these days the term *oyaji* is often coupled with another derogatory term, *sukebei*, which by combining the two ("*sukebei oyaji*") is the equivalent of "dirty old man."

Perhaps another reason for the lack of respect for fathers in general is their constant absence from the home due to a demanding work schedule. A father's absence in the home is further aggravated by transfers that are frequent among forty to fifty-year-old employees of larger companies. *Tanshin funin* (relocation of an employee to a far away branch without his wife and children accompanying him) requires that the employee lives alone for a few years away from his family which leads to further alienation; a refusal to go means that there will be no prospects for career advancement (Japan Travel Bureau 49). In contrast with the Edo Period child disciplining manuals of the past that addressed fatherhood in the family, the newest "manuals" published for men are books which aim to initiate fathers in the art of coping with daily life by himself in the event of *tanshin funin*. They contain recipes that are "simple and nourishing" and little "tips" on how to simplify their lives such as the recommendation to buy a dozen pairs of underwear so that they do not run out (Jolivet 70-72).

Doi (1953) claims that a characteristic of modern Japanese society is that it has become a "fatherless society." The absence of the father in the home means that the interaction with his family is minimal and he has even less influence on the lives of his children. Jolivet (66-69) asserts that nearly all Japanese fathers run the risk of going through an identity crisis. They are so engrossed with their work that to be accused of not assuming a role for which they were not prepared leaves them confused.

The father does not exist in the domestic sphere and does not have a space to call his own; he has become a virtual intruder in his own home. Nowadays fathers appear at their worst when they are at home. They provide a negative role model for their children when they lie snoozing in front of the television all day on the weekends due to absolute exhaustion. A father's wearied behavior sends a negative message to his son about to graduate from high school or university and ready to follow in his father's footsteps.

On a positive note, according to anthropologist Hara Hiroko, recently many men from the younger generation that have become fathers are trying hard to become a part of their family. Some are leaving work earlier and spending more time with their wives and children on the weekends, even at the expense of being reprimanded by superiors. More and more husbands are offering to share in the housework, cooking, and child care and desire to take on an active role in their child's life (Jolivet 176-78).

In the 1980s, with regard to the "fatherless society," a poll of students at Tokyo University showed that the person they most respected was their mother.

The father's influence on their lives became almost non-existent (Doi 150-52). A 1987 government survey by the Management and Coordination Agency Youth Bureau on Japanese children and their fathers found that 37.4 percent of fathers questioned admitted they had no contact at all with their children during workdays. Any contact between fathers and children was limited to approximately thirty-six minutes per day. A lack of oral communication and general lack of interest in their children's lives and pursuits are reflected in the admission that they do not make good companions because they lack time.

Most fathers had very little time to converse with their children on a daily basis. Sixteen percent of those surveyed admitted that they have no contact at all with their children except for on public holidays. It seems that on the weekend there was no desire to make up for lost time; one hour and thirty-two minutes per week including Sunday is all the time many fathers could afford to offer their children. When a Japanese father does spend time with his family he might begrudgingly refer to it as performing a "chore" and utilize the term *kazoku sâbisu* ("the family service"). However, this is not to say that all fathers are heartless, workaholic demons. Many have a guilty conscience; out of those surveyed on how much they think about their children, eighty percent replied that they thought about them "a lot" (Jolivet 61-63).

In middle class families the mother is the main agent of a boy's socialization and is responsible for his education. Strong emotional bonds form with the mother due to the father's absence from the home. Many Japanese boys face the problem of becoming men without male role models (Lebra 346-47).



Children witness their mothers treating their fathers like useless debris. This instills a negative view of fathers from the very start. Miyamoto (186) asserts that the Japanese family has always centered around the child and the mother-child bond is stronger than the husband-wife bond, which results in the children developing extremely dependent personalities and insecurity about being on their own. It is not difficult to imagine that such bonding leads to some boys developing sexual feelings for their mothers. Miyamoto (186) further maintains that from a psychological standpoint, people raised in this type of sheltered environment are shy with strangers and unable to express their own opinions. Therefore, those children that have been raised in such a sheltered environment might, as adults, drink alcohol in excess in social situations in order to lose some of their inhibitions. However, the end result is that they are rendered completely out of control.

The *amae* shown to sons in the early years of childhood coupled with the existence of an overbearing mother might occasionally lead to the development of a *mazakon* ("mother complex") later on in life. A man with such a complex might verbally insult his wife by saying that her cooking is not as good as his mother's or that she does not dress as "feminine" as his mother did. In essence, the husband still feels like he mentally belongs to his mother (Condon 47). *Mazakon* and its influence on the relationship between husbands and wives and their sexuality will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

### **The birds and the bees: sex education or lack thereof**

The predecessor to current methods of sex education began in the Meiji Era and was termed *junketsu kyôiku* ("purity education"). The impetus for educating female students especially about "purity" was to condemn sex outside the sanctity of marriage. *Junketsu kyôiku* has since been discontinued but its legacy has not.

The first sex-related lesson in the national curriculum guidelines in the mid- 1980s instructed fifth grade students on the physical changes accompanying puberty. Almost always, instructors separate girls and boys before introducing the subject, which is in line with the traditional Confucianist dictates of separating boys and girls throughout their entire education. The guidelines recommended briefly teaching about hormones in junior high school followed by more private anatomical information in high school health and science classes. However, it is important to note that the content of the classes is up to the administration's interpretation. Each school is able to decide for itself whether to follow the guidelines; sexuality is still such a delicate subject in Japan<sup>37</sup> that most parents dread discussing it with children and most teachers approach the subject very cautiously. Instructors who teach high school health classes are usually physical education teachers whose primary interests are sports<sup>38</sup> (Cherry 110).

In her book, Condon (160) interviewed Japanese women about their experiences with sex education while growing up. One woman stated that she believes that Japan is still very closed about sex education and this was apparent in the attitude of her teacher and parents. Her teacher would be so embarrassed

during the sex lecture that the students would be, too. No one really learned anything from the class but instead relied on magazines and their friends. Since parents are embarrassed to discuss sex with their children, the children do not ask questions. One thing the students did learn about in school was menstruation. For one day during the fifth grade the boys were sent home and the girls all gathered in a room to view an instructional film about menstruation. The extent of her sexual education added up to exactly one day<sup>39</sup>. Another woman Condon (93) interviewed mentions that she believes that the number of rising abortions in Japan is due to the lack of sex education. In her class, the teacher simply told the girls that they are capable of bearing children but that was it. Questions were not asked and sex was never discussed in the family either. She asserts that older men might seem to know what to do but younger boys know even less than the girls do; in her case she had to instruct her first boyfriend.

Besides asking friends, children also pick up what they know about sex on the street since it is so easy to do. Commercialized sex is very prevalent in Japan from suggestive advertising using women's bodies to sell products, to vending machines offering pornography in plain view, to *ero manga* (erotic or pornographic comic books) that give the impression that sex and violence go hand in hand. Sex is rarely viewed as an enjoyable or positive part of a romantic relationship to show respect or love for the partner except in Hollywood movies which Japanese enjoy. The male *ero manga* reader only sees explicit scenes of male sadism and female masochism and that the female characters all end up getting raped but enjoy it in the end or are begging for sex. The message encoded

in these sexually explicit scenes is that women are always waiting and wanting for sex. Furthermore, women are portrayed as universally enjoying sex involving violent acts. Consequently, many boys and men are led to believe this illusion and therefore treat women as sex objects (Condon 76-79).

Anthropologist Allison (Permitted 54) further explores the role that *ero manga* play in boys and men's lives. In Japan, *ero manga* are readily available and commonly enjoyed in everyday life. They are sold on virtually every street corner and read in very public places and during daily events such as commuting to work or school on the trains<sup>40</sup>. The very act of buying an *ero manga* before a commute and discarding it at the end of the journey signifies how common a commodity an erotic comic book is and how commonplace its stories are with their prevailing scheme of male conquest, rape, and female victimization. The women in these comics are all captured against their will and barely speak except to utter cries of "help me," "it hurts," or "I beg of you." Furthermore, at the end of the sex act, the women are typically discarded by their violators and sometime left with physical scars to serve as a reminder of their "encounter." The sexual goals that are dominant in the majority of erotic comics are of controlling males possessing, penetrating, and hurting women. Many men rely on a variety of objects and weapons to fulfill these goals such as baseball bats, swords, knives, and golf clubs (Allison Permitted 62-64).

Subliminally boys receive messages from the commodified visual violence so prevalent outside that women are to be treated like sex objects. But inside the home it is a different story. Many children do not witness their parents displaying



affection to each other in the home and some parents do not ever sleep together in the same bed. Since love is not expressed and sex is hidden, children learn from their parents that love and sex are not integral parts of a Japanese family.

In Japan, a contradiction exists regarding sex. Considering how pervasive pornography and the sex industry are there seems to be public acceptance of sex. In contrast, in the home sex is not discussed and is treated as a taboo subject making it seem unacceptable. Children receive mixed messages regarding sex when they are surrounded by pornographic images every day yet not given the proper sex education in school because it is too shameful. Girls are taught by mothers to be chaste and prepare for motherhood, and fathers teach boys that it is acceptable to be promiscuous as long as it is not brought into the home. The old dichotomy of a man entertaining himself with the loose whore outside and residing with the chaste virgin at home still prevails. Boys learn that there is a certain type of woman to marry and she should not be his "lover" with whom he can show affection, but rather his sexless "wife" with whom he can raise a family. **The "pseudo-homosexual society:" boys do not know how to talk to girls**

Besides providing the gender role models for their children, Japanese parents demonstrate to their children that mothers and fathers do not socialize together. During their childhood, the father spends such little time at home and the mother is preoccupied with pressuring her son to perform well in school that there is rarely an occasion for the parents to enjoy each other's company. Japanese boys and girls are also taught in school not to socialize together. When travelling as a group boys group up with other boys and girls with other girls.



When parties are held the Japanese rarely interact with the opposite sex. Men group with men and would be viewed as curious if they broke from the group and deliberately tried to socialize with women. According to Doi, (113-14) the importance of "pseudo-homosexual feelings" is paramount in Japanese society. In a broader sense of the definition of "homosexual" (which is commonly defined as having sexual desire for members of the same sex) the emotional links between members of the same sex (even junior and senior members) takes precedence over those with the opposite sex. Boys and girls usually do not go out on dates when growing up so they have no idea how to interact with each other once they reach adulthood. Therefore, most Japanese men have difficulty relating to women and view them either as sex objects to play with or potential wives and mothers who are able to understand them without much conversation.

Miyamoto (61) explains that male-only banquets which take place in the corporation and the bureaucracy have two characteristics: the participants' speech and actions become very juvenile and men (inebriated or otherwise) hang onto each other in way that carries homosexual nuances. It is only at this time that they reveal their *honne* ("true feelings" or "honest opinion") to each other.

What Miyamoto fails to recognize is the irony that with a teenage prostitute even though they must pay for the privilege men are also able to reveal their true, inner feelings. This disclosure would not be as likely to happen however, with a girlfriend or wife since the man must not seem too needy or "emotional" and must preserve his masculinity. In order to feel more confident about socializing with women and feel safe to disclose his repressed *honne* is one

reason a man might engage in *enjo kôсай* with a girl he barely knows. Perhaps for some Japanese men who wish to divulge their *honne* to those other than their coworkers, it is much easier to reveal their true feelings to an anonymous high school girl rather than a wife or girlfriend.

### CHAPTER THREE: HOW JAPAN INC. BECAME JOHN INC.

#### Welcome to the corporation, now give us your soul

Education, both in the home and outside the home, plays a significant role in the early socialization of Japanese men. It is not through education and upbringing alone, however, that upon entering adulthood, a Japanese man suddenly transforms into a frequent patron of the *shasei sangyô*. The fiercely competitive educational system in Japan has aptly prepared young men to enter the hierarchical institution of the corporation for a lifetime of service. However, it is primarily the corporation itself that is responsible for socializing these men into dedicated employees willing to consign their lives to the company while neglecting their individual needs (such as physical health) and families.

Upon entering the cubicles of the corporation, an employee is effectively trained to conform to the dictates of his new "family" even at the expense of alienation from his own. In this case, conformity means not only working long hours in the office but indulging in after hours pursuits such as drinking in hostess bars with superiors outside of the office regardless of exhaustion or dislike for such practices.

By adopting the *mizu shôbai* as the "official" venue for *settai*, the company has promoted the idea that work and play intersect, and employees who play together along with superiors at the expense of the company will remain loyal. One repercussion of this process of corporate socialization is that the company has deliberately and openly molded these men into lifelong patrons of

the sex industry. In this final chapter, the role of the company in a *sararîman*'s life and his decision to engage in *enjo kôsai* will be examined.

After a university graduate has gone through the rigorous and stressful process of job hunting, and only if he has the right academic credentials, right haircut and attitude, and passes the company exam will he land a job with a major corporation. So, what exactly is expected of the recruit in the years to come? What does it mean to be identified as a *kaisha ningen* ("company man")?

The standard expectations of a company man are of a severe schedule coupled with intense commitment to the corporation. The *kaisha ningen* is a worker so devoted to the company that he rarely returns home at night. The commitment to work is apparent in adjectives used to describe an admirably dedicated worker such as *môretsu* ("intense" or "keen") and *bari bari* ("aggressively digesting the workload"). Almost all workers assume that such an attitude must be embraced for fear that promotion through the ranks would be highly limited without such devotion (Allison Nightwork 98).

A white-collar job in Japan is not simply a Monday through Friday, nine to five position wherein one punches a time clock; working overtime is expected of all employees and reaches up to one hundred hours per month without proper compensation. Those that miss the last train home to the suburbs may end up sleeping on the office couch for the night. It is not uncommon for employees to work on holidays and weekends (Japan Travel Bureau 26-27).

Starting out at the bottom of the corporate ladder means long hours of overtime, always agreeing with superiors, and assenting to go on *settai* or any

after hours activity the boss chooses, regardless of fatigue or after work personal commitments. It only takes one incident for a novice *sararîman* to learn that arriving late to work or leaving early for the day without ever putting in overtime is penalized with scorn and ostracism from not only the boss, but also his peers. The transgressor will not be regarded as a member of the group and thus, by his actions he is seen as deliberately alienating himself. As Miyamoto (138) demonstrates with a personal example, one morning he arrived slightly late to work. The secretary who brought him tea every morning was just about to place the tea on his desk when the boss, who was aware of his lateness, angrily instructed the secretary not to give the late employee any tea. Clearly, the denial of his morning tea served as punishment for selfishly arriving late. It also sent an explicit message to the other employees that lateness is neither allowed nor tolerated, and if it occurs then punishment will be swiftly executed. Lateness is so frowned upon that subway stations issue certificates of delayed service when trains do not arrive on time due to accidents so that employees can present them to their employers and be excused of their tardiness.

Besides learning by personal example, how else does a new employee discover the high expectations of the company? Indoctrination into the *sararîman*'s new corporate "family" is immediate. An official *nyûsha shiki* (ceremony to commemorate new employees joining the company) is held in-house annually in April to welcome all the new recruits hired over the new fiscal year. Large companies use a public space when there are a large number of new employees. The company president speaks at length about the company and its



expectations and urges all new recruits to become productive employees and "responsible members of society." The ceremony usually concludes with everyone singing the *shaka* ("company song") together (Thomas 72-73).

After participating in this initiation ceremony, rookie *sarariman* have their identity forged. When meeting new contacts, they are trained to state the company's name before their own which affirms that the employee represents the company. For example, an introduction would generally begin with "pleased to meet you, I am Mitsubishi Corporation's Tanaka." As the months pass and his allegiance to the company intensifies, the employee comes to regard the company as "his father, his lover, his child, even his god" (Japan Travel Bureau 84-85). This type of devotion is not unique to the business world in modern Japan. In times past, samurai pledged absolute allegiance to their masters. Today, loyalty to one's feudal lord has been replaced with loyalty to the corporation.

After their initial welcome to the company through the hiring ceremony, the indoctrination continues as new members are given behavior lessons. *Shinnyû shainkyôiku* ("new employee education") is designed to teach new workers basic knowledge about the company as well as how to behave as responsible and mature corporate citizens. *Aisha seishin* (the spirit of an employee's loyalty to his company) is instilled through activities such as requiring employees to recite the *shakun* ("company constitution" or "mission statement") during the morning assembly wherein employees are prepared to enthusiastically seize the day ahead. *Shashô* ("company badges"), which resemble military squad identification patches, are proudly displayed on suit lapels and enforce a sense of belonging to

the corporation (Japan Travel Bureau 84-85). Employees are representatives of the firm and as such, must act appropriately on company time (except when inebriated) and refrain from disgracing their superiors or tarnishing the company name.

Along with subscribing to particular codes of behavior, employees are also obligated to conform to company standards of dress and appearance. Traditionally, the typical *sarariman*'s style of dress is a dark blue or gray two piece suit, white or light blue dress shirt, dark colored, plain necktie and black leather shoes. Black suits are worn only at funerals and anyone wearing a flamboyant color suit will not be taken seriously. Plain, metal frame square rimmed glasses, a practical watch (as unostentatious as possible), no jewelry (except for a wedding ring if they choose to wear one), short hair parted on the side, and the absence of facial hair are compulsory. Long hair, trendy hairstyles, and mustaches are considered distasteful. Permed hair, white suits with bright colored shirts and open collars are equated with the *yakuza* and would incite disgust from coworkers and bosses alike (Japan Travel Bureau 10-11).

The overall message corporate employees receive is crystal clear: conform to all company standards or risk of being dismissed. There is a fitting idiom in Japanese that encapsulates this sentiment: *deru kui wa utareru* ("the stake that sticks up will be pounded down"), which infers that difference is compelled into conformity (Maynard and Maynard 182-83).

To further promote employee loyalty, group harmony, and discipline, *sarariman* might be required to attend *gasshuku* ("training camps"). Groups of

*sararîman* retreat to mountain lodges, temples, and Zen monasteries wherein they lead extremely disciplined lives for a fixed period of time. Zen Buddhist meditation is practiced to cultivate the spirit, and martial arts are used to build up physical strength. Cooperation is instilled as all men must sleep, eat, study, meditate, and play together. Everyone participates in these activities together as if they were one body. As a result, total conformity is achieved. Strict discipline, subordination to the group and one's superiors, the capacity to endure hardship, and a heightened sense of selfless loyalty are all objectives of corporate Zen training (Japan Travel Bureau 38-39; Victoria 126-30).

This intensive Zen training is not limited to rookies alone. Many middle management and top management groups also participate. These veterans must undergo "manager cultivation education" to test their mental and physical strength and ability to deal with adversity by participating in activities such as standing under a waterfall or remaining stationary in the ocean in winter, or trekking on a mountain survival program (Japan Travel Bureau 47). Management consultants are even available who specialize in arranging Zen training sessions for the various divisions of employees (Victoria 118). Victoria (126-30) mentions that the military like discipline encountered in these training programs is certainly something that Japanese corporations continue to find effective. One new salesman who had just completed his company's training program noted that his training schedule has much in common with that of a soldier.

It is no wonder that corporations utilize such stringent measures when indoctrinating their employees. How else can a corporate samurai remain devoted

to his master and amenable to doing battle with competitors if he has not been trained to do so? Without forcibly instilling such a deep sense of loyalty it is doubtful that any soldier would be willing to turn his life over to the corporation.

Traditionally, an integral component of Japanese companies was the promise of *shûshin koyôsei*, which was beneficial for the *sararîman* as it promised job security and a steady salary. For employers secure employment serves as an incentive, and it also promotes employee allegiance, subservience, and dedication since the penalty of job-hopping is high. The premise is that employees work at the same company from the time they graduate university until the mandatory retirement age<sup>41</sup>. Some companies started to reduce the employment of middle-aged employees as recession lingered in the 1990s. This, however, further served as an incentive provider for corporate loyalty because of increased competition to survive.

*Nenkô joretsu* ("length of service pay increase"), another characteristic of Japanese employment practices, means that salary and rank rise in accordance with the number of years one works at the corporation. Consecutive service at the same corporation assures a steady rise in salary, so very few employees consider leaving (Sugiura and Gillespie 225). As a result, most *sararîman* remain with the same corporate family (which includes transferring to affiliates or subsidiaries) until retirement.

Young university graduates realize that the job they land right out of university will have a major impact on the rest of their lives, which adds even more stress to the entire job recruiting process. Choosing the right company is

essential. Those that move from company to company are seen as disloyal, flighty, unreliable, and unwise. They have ruined their chances at gaining seniority.

Currently, lifetime employment seems to be on its way out as economic restructuring and the downsizing of corporations have taken their toll. Young male university graduates are still finding jobs in major corporations even while the unemployment rate has risen. What has changed is senior employees might be discharged if they are found to be too much of a "cost" to the company. This seems to be making a lot of middle aged *sarariman* nervous.

**Oh the stress of it all! White-collar resentment rising**

As if standing under a freezing waterfall in the middle of winter to nurture his loyalty to the company is not enough to make a grown *sarariman* cry, he must also contend with the extraneous pressures of daily life. Firstly, even after being subjected to fierce educational competition and subsequent rivalry in the job search, competition crosses over to the workplace. In the corporation, one is never free from competition even with the apparent security of lifetime employment.

Because the only group most *sarariman* belong to is their work group within a company, they are highly sensitive to the slightest difficulties in personal relations. Many men are distressed about the way their superiors treat them and often complain that they are not being looked after well enough by them. They also become annoyed when their superiors verbally reprimand them. These men have no other alternative than to remain with the company under their boss so it is



in their best interest to fortify the relationship and try to make it work. There might be a possibility of transferring to another section within the company, but this would not end their difficulties and might provoke resentment from colleagues and superiors alike. If a superior singles out a subordinate member of the group as the "golden boy," other members are likely to become envious of him especially if he begins to boast about his favored status (Vogel 105-06).

Within a company there are many layers of group affiliation, therefore, competition exists among sections, within a section there exists competition among subsections, within a subsection members are working together while competing against each other. Employees are encouraged to cooperate with their colleagues, yet at the same time they are forced to engage in competition with one another to demonstrate their dedication to the company all the while vying for their superior's respect (similar to the relationship between the players and their coach on a baseball team).

A *sarariman* must dread knowing that each day he must once again compete against his colleagues (even if it is "healthy" competition, there are still adversarial overtones). Many company men must automatically learn to safeguard their actions and regulate their speech with colleagues by not revealing much so as not to give them an edge in the competition. For example, if an employee admits to a colleague in his subsection that he loathes paperwork, perhaps that colleague will use that personal information against him to boost his own reputation in his bosses' eyes as a paperwork wizard, meanwhile the man who admitted his feelings ends up looking bad. Now, not only do employees

need to walk on eggshells around their bosses, but also with colleagues/friends. Gradually the workplace has transformed into a battlefield where adversaries and allies are interchangeable and one must always be suited up in armor ready to stand on guard.

### Thinning wallets and male dowries

Personal finances are another source of stress for almost all *sararīman*. The wages that they earn certainly do not go straight into their pockets. The average employee's salary has already been allotted to household expenditures before it reaches his bank account. The biannual bonuses they receive (which fluctuate depending on corporate performance) are spent on home mortgage repayment, children's education, daily living expenses, and *ochūgen* ("mid-year gift") and *oseibo* ("year end gift") which are sent to several dozen people to whom they feel indebted <sup>42</sup> (Japan Travel Bureau 41, 120; Sugiura and Gillespie 157, 160).

Attending the weddings and funerals of coworkers is mandatory for the *sararīman*, which is an added strain to his tight budget. When attending a funeral or wedding in Japan one is supposed to bring a gift of cash in a special envelope. The amount to enclose is determined by the significance of the relationship with the deceased, groom, bride, and or their families, and usually ranges from ¥10,000 to ¥50,000 (Japan Travel Bureau 122-23). How can his salary possibly cover all of these extraneous expenses?

Taking out a bank loan is very common in Japan, however, this practice has its downside. Upon receiving the promise of work at a corporation, many

new employees borrow money from banks that do not require security for loans since a familiar company name will suffice. Therefore, most men are unable to ever leave the company due to incurring a huge debt (Iwashita 24). Once they are able to start a family and buy a house, most *sarariman* take out a thirty to forty year home loan which require regular payments and can be quite burdensome. As parents, they have to save money for expensive cram schools, entrance examinations, and school entrance fees for their children. When it comes time for their own children to get married, the parents almost always foot the bill. Weddings are generally an elaborate and extremely costly affair in Japan (not to mention the honeymoon and starting up a new household). It is highly unusual for a young couple to have enough money to pay for the wedding reception. Therefore it is the parent's obligation to ensure that their son or daughter is able to have a proper celebration. This can put a major dent in the family bank account. Another family-related financial stress a man must contend with if he is an only son is the obligation to take care of elderly parents. If his parents are infirm then this can deplete a good portion of his savings (Japan Travel Bureau 133).

If an employee is single, he must save a large amount of money in order to sufficiently provide for a future family (sort of a male dowry if you will, although the money does not go to the bride's family). There is tremendous societal, corporate, and parental pressure for men (and women) to get married and conform to societal norms. When questioned about their motives in getting married, most young men responded nonchalantly that it was the norm to get married at their

age, or that they would lose social credibility if they did not marry by a certain age, or that they wanted to please their parents (Jolivet 166).

Generally, in a Japanese corporation, no marriage equals no promotion. Some companies may even promote *shanai kekkon* ("inter-company marriage"). It is not uncommon for men and women who work together (mostly *sarariman* and office ladies) to marry. Out of two thousand couples surveyed in 1995, almost half replied that they had initially met on the job (Ogasawara 46).

If a man is unable to meet his future wife on the job, he may choose to enroll in bachelor school. According to sociologist Jolivet (165-68), feminist Higuchi Keiko, who believes that Japanese men need to revise their outdated, patriarchal views on women and marriage, was inspired to open *Hanamuko Gakkô* ("the bridegroom school") in hopes of reforming these men. Two and a half hours per week for three months costs ¥40,000 (approximately US\$322) but provides these men with the "know-how" which allows them to "deserve" a Japanese wife. *Hanamuko Gakkô* offers more "theoretical" training or conditioning for men than their rival schools.

One rival, *Hanamuko Kôza* ("the bridegroom course"), only emphasizes the "how" of attracting potential wives and concentrates on the art of showing oneself off to an advantage: how to smile, how far away to sit, where to look, and how to always have something to say. An in-class group *omiai* (a meeting between singles traditionally arranged by a matchmaker for the purpose of finding a marriage partner) is held twice a month wherein thirty young men and thirty young women are brought together and move from partner to partner like an

assembly line. Each person only has three minutes per participant of the opposite sex to "catch" a partner, if the *omia*i is not successful, it is not a total loss since another one begins in two weeks' time.

Approximately one hundred men are enrolled in the three-month course at Higuchi's school, with the majority aged between twenty-five to thirty-nine; almost all men work in the private sector. Some graduates took their schooling so seriously that they requested an association of former students be formed wherein they discuss what the entire experience taught them and share their insights. One graduate divulged that Japanese men are as "clumsy" as they are with women because they are inhibited by the fear of making a mistake.

The problem of finding a suitable wife has been exacerbated not only by the fact that these men must have enough money saved for their future family expenses, but that Japanese women's attitudes have changed toward marriage and their partners' responsibilities in the home. Many young women no longer find these "corporate warriors" attractive and are not sympathetic to their plight. More and more young women are postponing marriage and as a result are able to enjoy freedom while remaining single and working. They no longer want to be viewed as surrogate mothers of immature men once they become wives. Instead they look for a husband who will help out around the house and actively participate in his children's lives (Iwao 273-74).

Men who are only sons might face further difficulties in finding wives. Some women might not want to incur the extra burden of being married to an only son since they will undoubtedly be obligated to share in the responsibility of



taking care of their husband's elderly parents (besides her own if she has no brothers). As opposed to traditional customs, women are now able to afford the luxury of choosing a potential partner and if a man is deemed unsuitable in the woman's eyes there is no obligation for marriage (Iwao 271-74; Jolivet 167). Japanese men must "prove" that they are worthy of marrying financially and physically. As if they did not have enough stress during their childhood years trying to "prove" themselves academically, they must now do so in the corporation as employees and with potential girlfriends/wives as being a good catch.

Once a *sarariman* finds a wife, he must accept that his days of financial independence are gone. Married employees turn their entire paycheck over to their wives and are dispensed a weekly allowance. The banking system in Japan is such that as a result of computerization, employers deposit salaries directly into employee accounts. The husband never even sees the money he works so hard for, only a deposit slip; it is the wife who then makes the necessary withdrawals from the bank (Buckley 73).

The expression *sen'en teishu* ("thousand yen husbands") became popular in the 1980s. It refers to men who relinquish their paychecks to their wives then wait to have a minimal daily allowance doled out for cigarettes and lunch. In the 1960s the daily amount was ¥100 and it increased to ¥1000 in the 1980s. The phrase is considered insulting because the husband is given such a stingy amount. This lack of control over their finances and family matters is humiliating and emasculating for some men.

Because husbands work such long hours and are consequently absent from the home, wives (being generally relegated to the domestic sphere) make most of the decisions around the house. Decisions range from what type of rice to feed their family, to what brand of refrigerator to purchase to where the children will attend school. Women hold the purse strings in Japan. As such household treasurers, corporations realize that women are the prime consumers and target them by marketing consumer products and investment opportunities specifically for their needs. Advertisers recognize that women exercise personal preferences even when shopping for the entire family so they increasingly target female consumers when promoting cars and computers as well as food and fashions (Cherry 72-73).

#### **"In-house" divorce**

Husbands are often pressured by wives to succeed in the company which means getting on the right course for career advancement. However, not all *sarariman* will be promoted (Japan Travel Bureau 42-43). If a wife realizes that her husband has no bright future with the company (such as becoming a board member or being on the "elite track" to executive status) then she rejects him and begins to pour all of her energy into her son and his education in order to guarantee his future success. This "demasculinizes" the husband because he is no longer considered the man of the house, the role he has been trained for since childhood. Instead, he has become the unappreciated breadwinner: a husband and father figurehead only. The husband and his needs are ignored and their domestic

situation resembles a gradual divorce without ever having to go through with the actual legal procedure.

The term *kateinai rikon* ("divorce within the household") refers to a couple that does not sleep together anymore but maintain a minimal contract wherein they stay together for economic reasons or for the future of their children (Iwao 96). Perhaps another adage is even more telling about the nature of the relationship between a *sararîman* and his wife: *teishu wa jôbu de rusu ga ii* (the ideal situation for a housewife that her husband is healthy but away from home). This implies that as long as they are able to work and continue to earn a paycheck their presence is not necessary or wanted in the home (Cherry 136).

What happens when a husband does not live up to his duty of providing for his family? What if he has a sexual addiction, gambling or drinking problem that causes a heavy debt burden? Some men do live beyond their means and lose everything, which, in some cases, results in the debtor fleeing from the debt-collector or committing suicide. At one point, this phenomenon was so prevalent in Japan that it earned the name *sarakin jigoku* ("loan hell" where the loan is borrowed from non-bank money lenders that do not ask for collateral).

A *sararîman* may not be inclined to deplete the family finances for supplementary expenses but still has a strong obligation to participate in all the entertainment rituals related to his job: client dinners, meetings in hostess clubs and bars, golf with clients and/or the boss, weekend business excursions. Therefore, in order to be able to afford such obligatory after work customs, he must resort to borrowing from a loan shark who would accept his future salary as

collateral but only at exorbitant interest rates. Many are unable to repay the loan sharks (who are part of the *yakuza* network) and as a result, retribution is in order; this almost always leads to disaster such as being severely beaten, blackmailed, "apparent" or actual suicide (Buckley 74).

Even if he was not in debt to a loan shark, the average *sarariman* has very little financial freedom and even less free time. Sometimes jealousy can occur when an overworked husband realizes how much free time his wife actually has. While husbands are away hard at work, with what do wives occupy their time? Since the wife has given up the idea of spending time with her absent husband, she bonds with her children, prepares them for success in society and plans their futures, manages the household finances and takes care of the home. Besides her duties in the home, she has been able to afford the luxury of a social life, which her husband has not. While the kids are away at school she has her own life and pursues interests such as getting together with friends for lunch or shopping, taking tennis or English lessons, or perhaps flower arranging classes. She might even take a part-time job (Iwao 53; Condon 4-5).

Another option that a housewife might pursue to fill her husbands' absence is to commit adultery. Since the husband and wife very rarely communicate or come into contact with each other, bored or lonely housewives might embark upon an affair or clandestinely work part-time in the ejaculation industry for sexual fulfillment (Iwao 108-11).

Another source of stress comes if a working husband happens to return home to his wife one night and wishes to sleep together, but finds her quite

unresponsive and uninterested (regardless of whether or not she was having an extramarital affair). The husband receives a clear message that his presence is neither wanted nor needed in the home (except for his paycheck). He realizes that he is unable to fulfill his wife's life for she has her own existence that she has cultivated without him over the years.

#### **Antagonists in the workplace: office ladies and their economic freedom**

Jealousy and resentment also grow when *sararīman* see how much economic freedom and leisure time the OL in their corporation have. Ideally, the average OL is between the ages of twenty and thirty, the graduate of a two-year junior college, single, and merely biding her time in the firm until she receives a suitable marriage proposal. Since the mid-1980s, the OL has used her considerable financial resources to construct a vibrant "subculture" of her own. Besides the high school girls of today, the OL are probably the only ones who can afford to purchase brand name consumer goods, travel to exotic destinations, dine out at expensive restaurants, attend the movies with friends, and engage in a number of other leisurely activities. Most OL live under their parent's roof rent free and do not need to save money to provide for a future family, consequently leaving them with a larger disposable income than any other group of adults in Japan (Kelsky 3-4).

Even after the collapse of the Bubble Economy, the OL consistently spend billions of yen annually in the fashion, travel, and publishing industries. Her average monthly salary amounts to approximately ¥220,000 (US\$1,770) per month not including biannual bonuses ("Revenge" 41). If she goes out on a date



with a man she is at the advantage financially; since men usually pay for all date expenses, women can save a sizeable amount of money. Some OL even claim to have large amounts of cash on hand (Kelsky 7). Sales of department store items such as cosmetics, accessories, women's apparel, shoes, and handbags continue to soar all due to the OL's patronage. The OL are not required to work as many hours as *sarariman* and are not expected to participate in most of the after-hours activities that their male office mates do, therefore they have a great deal more free time on their hands. Generally, they are free from responsibility until they marry so they are able to take advantage of the high life during their single years.

Most OL have traveled abroad and continue to take yearly trips to locations such as Guam, Saipan, Hawaii, and Bali. While on their vacation, some get foreign boyfriends, which makes male colleagues even more jealous and resentful as they feel their chances of being a potential mate are threatened.

The OL have often been lambasted by the media (especially by male reporters covering the story) as being irresponsible, consumer driven airheads who behave inappropriately and selfishly (which is reminiscent of how the high school girls of today are also portrayed). One such reporter commented that many OL who travel overseas know exactly what they want when they are off on vacation: to have casual flings with "exotic" local men. He further asserts that naturally, they want nothing to do with Japanese men and shun them once back in the office. They find Japanese men unsophisticated and boring because they only devote themselves to their work and the corporation, have not traveled extensively, and have not pursued any hobbies or interests outside of the office.

OL feel they have nothing in common with most Japanese men (Ogasawara 25; Kelsky 3-8; "Revenge" 41).

Some men are intimidated by the OL and find it hard to muster up the courage to ask them out on a date for fear of rejection or of being labeled uninteresting or plain. They might then conclude that their only answer to finding a mate is bachelor school or an arranged marriage. With such fragile and already bruised egos, it is no wonder that some men resort to paying for companionship with a teenage girl or a Soapland masseuse since they are guaranteed a date (and in many cases sex) as long as they put up the cash.

#### **Coping with the pressure: sex, booze, cigarettes, and suicide**

Bruised egos and inactive sex lives (due to impotence or unwillingness of partners) are not the only hazards of the job for most men. Being a workaholic brings with it a whole range of physical ailments. *Karôshi*, aching lungs from chain smoking, stomach ulcers due to constant stress, weak livers from excessive alcohol consumption, exhaustion due to lack of sleep, sexually transmitted diseases if they practice unsafe sex with women in the industry, and suicide due to financial problems or unemployment are some of the work-related health risks.

Allison (Nightwork 136-37) suggests that selective impotence is also a result of a strenuous work environment. It is interesting to note that male clients who visit sex therapists complain of impotence with their wives or girlfriends, but when questioned about sexual acts performed with prostitutes many reveal that they are able to perform. Having a hectic work schedule deprives them of the time and energy to have sex with their partners. Work keeps them so busy that

they only have a limited amount of time for a sexual encounter and during that time they want to be taken care of completely which is, according to many men, something that their partners are unable to do. It is easier to perform with a faceless woman in the sex trade because he does not have to see her again if he does not want to. In addition, a lack of obligation beyond money may attract to men to visit prostitutes.

Furthermore, sex therapists are encountering more and more cases of impotence occurring in younger *sarariman* on the "elite-track" who have been subjected to tremendous pressure throughout their entire academic lives in order to attain success. These young men have had no time to cultivate relationships with women and have sacrificed their sexuality during their adolescence in exchange for scholastic achievement. As a result, many are rendered impotent due to their erotic fantasies being incomplete or unfulfilled. One answer to that situation is to seek sexual satisfaction from prostitutes outside rather than relying on a girlfriend or wife in the private domain.

In addition to soliciting prostitutes, how do some men endure the pressures of their job? One former corporate employee explains how he used to get through his days. He often drank "health drinks" (cocktails of caffeine and other drugs) readily available at a number of stores, train stations, and in street vending machines which would keep him going even when he was completely exhausted<sup>43</sup>. At the time he was working in the 1980s and early 90s, taking anything medicinal to avoid exhaustion on the job was a necessity since *karôshi* was increasingly common and often noted in the newspapers (Iwashita 24).

The most common physical complaint of male employees is a nervous stomach ulcer. Because of the frequency of these ulcers, most companies regard them on the same level as a common cold. Furthermore, by the time they reach their 40s, many *sarariman* are in such poor health that "it is a miracle they are alive at all" (Japan Travel Bureau 136). However, the agony does not stop in their 40s as most men continue working until retirement. Men in their 50s are referred to as *môretsu shain* ("workaholics") who live for their work and have very little concern for their families other than providing them with money. Men in their 60s suffer from *moetsuki shôkôgun* ("the burnout syndrome") having devoted themselves entirely to their work for the past forty years while disregarding their physical, mental, and emotional health (Japan Travel Bureau 89).

For some, suicide is a way out of an already terminal situation. According to the British Medical Journal (Lamar 528), in 1999, 33,048 people committed suicide in Japan and of that 23,512 were men; forty percent of that figure were men in their 40s and 50s. Middle-aged men were particularly likely to commit suicide because they were the most susceptible to dismissal due to corporate restructuring. Financial problems were the motive for one in three men who committed suicide. Forty-seven percent of those that committed suicide were without work. Japan has one of the highest suicide rates in the world at 17.2 deaths per 100,000 people.

### Cutting the umbilical cord to the company: retired life

So what happens when an employee actually lives to reach retirement age? How does he cope with not being a part of the organization that ran his life for the previous forty years? Retirement, for most men, is likened to severing the umbilical cord to the provider of their daily vital fluid. A fitting expression came into use by wives of retirees that demonstrates how, upon retirement, their husbands are disassociated with and stripped of the company name that provided them with their identity: *raberu no nai kanzume* ("unlabeled canned goods"). Another equally unflattering phrase coined in the 1970s by housewives (and still used today) that has become synonymous with retired husbands is *sodai gomi* ("giant garbage"). *Sodai gomi* is literally big, heavy, hard-to-dispose-of trash such as refrigerators. Wives call their husbands this as a way to complain about their aimless moping around the house, being good for nothing anymore other than earning post-retirement pensions or income, and always getting in the way. Until men retire from their jobs they spend so little time at home that they never develop a household niche; husbands who have defined themselves in terms of their jobs and devoted their lives to the company have become virtual intruders in their own homes (Cherry 135).

Later in the 1980s, younger women began to use the *sodai gomi* slur to protest that their pre-retirement husbands do not ever help around house during the few hours they spend at home after work. Soon thereafter a new phrase began to be adopted by many fed-up housewives. *Nure ochiba* ("wet, fallen leaves") refers to a bothersome husband being brushed out of the way by a busy housewife



only to have him cling to her the way wet leaves cling to the ground when one tries to sweep them away (Iwao 122-23).

Retired *sarariman* are rendered completely unequipped to deal with their new idle lifestyle. Husbands feel out of place and helpless around the house as life in the domestic sphere is totally foreign to them. Alienation from their own family has already occurred since these men have been absent for so long from the daily life of their families and now find that their children have already grown up and in some cases left the home. These men are also confronted with a strained relationship with their spouses. Over the years, their wives have been able to develop their own friends, a range of interests, and have pursued a social life, while their husbands have not been able to do the same.

When a husband and wife suddenly find themselves alone together, they soon realize that they no longer have anything in common, have nothing left to say to their partner, and that each one bores the other to death. The wife begins to wonder if there is any advantage to staying with such a partner. This situation is linked to the increased number of divorces among retirees. Generally, women endure the situation until their last child is married in order to avoid damaging prospects (divorce is still somewhat socially stigmatized in Japan). Others wait until their husbands have received their severance payment from work before leaving so that they can claim half for loyal and reliable service.

*Taishoku rikon* ("divorce upon retirement") is not such an infrequent occurrence among couples in Japan (Jolivet 75-76; Iwao 114). Many wives consider their formerly absentee husbands as dependent nuisances and ask for a

divorce upon retirement. Wearied housewives initiate the majority of all divorces: three out of four divorce requests come from women. Women often cite economic problems involving the husband (such as him not providing enough financial support for her or the family), incompatibility, and the husband's extramarital affairs as the major grounds for seeking a divorce. Lawyers point out that incompatibility often implies "sexual incompatibility" (Cherry 136; Iwao 116). While this last statement is rather vague, they may be referring to impotence or a lack of desire on the part of the husband.

Financial troubles can also be a source of stress and a reason for divorce among newly retired *sarariman*. No longer the full-time wage earner, he must rely on his pension to provide for himself and his family. Retirement can be rather emasculating for most *sarariman* as their only significant contribution to the family has been their steady salary. No longer working, he may feel inadequate and worthless. Depending on the size of the corporation that employed him, his pension might not sufficiently provide for the future needs of his wife and the household.

Pensions vary depending on the establishment. Generally, upon retirement, white collar workers receive a lump sum of money called a retirement allowance in recognition of their lengthy service together with a pension awarded five or six years later. The lump sum is equivalent to around twenty month's salary and the pension sixty to seventy percent of the salary upon retirement of which thirty percent is contributed by the firm and forty percent by the state. If it

is retirement from working at a large company after many years the amount is as much as ¥20 to ¥30 million (Sugiura and Gillespie 239; Jolivet 207).

This money will not last long as payments are still needed on a home loan, for daily household expenses, and for replacement of appliances or home renovations. There is little money left if the couple wants to travel or pursue other leisurely interests in their free time. Furthermore, if the husband continues to patronize the costly *mizu shōbai* on his own time with the company no longer footing the bill further financial strain occurs.

Some husbands become utterly despondent when their wives initiate divorce proceedings. This situation is exacerbated when retired men have a distant relationship with their children as at this point their sons and daughters have usually moved out the house and started their own families. Even if the children are not yet married, they do not really know their fathers due to prolonged absence from home throughout their upbringing. Some men endeavor to remarry and be taken care of by new wives as the prospect of living alone is tormenting and unbearable and they fear that they will be unable to survive daily life without the presence of a wife around to cook and clean for them.

If the wife does not want a divorce but carries on with a *kateinai rikon*, the husband can not bear the silence of being ignored any longer and resents being referred to as a wet leaf or big trash. Therefore, in his desperation and loneliness he turns to the ejaculation industry. Many of these men seek emotional and sexual comfort with prostitutes or other women in the *mizu shōbai* because this is the venue in which they have been accustomed to going for such comfort. Some

long so deeply for the female company they are not getting at home that the only option is to frequent establishments in the sex industry or engage in *enjo kôsai* with teenage girls. In the spring of 1997, Japanese newspapers cited cases of various retired men aged sixty-three to eighty being arrested for buying sex with girls as young as fourteen (Suemasu 15-16). Besides buying sex, divorced and aging men might seek solace in drinking alcohol and can become dependent on it in an attempt to forget their loneliness or marital infidelities (Jolivet 207).

### **High school girls as sex objects: the Lolita complex**

Why would a middle-aged or older man find a teenage girl so attractive? Youth is associated with purity and beauty in Japan; there seems to be no better way for an aged man to dip into the fountain of youth than to spend time with a seemingly virginal, innocent high school girl who can cater to his desires. *Rorikon* ("Lolita complex") refers to a man with a sexual preference for young girls. The term is derived from the 1955 book *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov that tells the story of how a fifty-year-old university professor's life is destroyed when he succumbs to the bewitchment of a twelve-year-old girl. *Rorikon* is a source of rejuvenation for a wearied *sarariman*. In his mind, the magical elixir of a virgin's essence might serve to cure his impotence and or enable him to regain his youth and feel strong and powerful.

However, in Japan, *rorikon* has recently become more open as it is just as tempting to young men as old. These young men have survived examination hell and grown up with their mothers waiting on them hand and foot, as a result, they are unable to take the next step into adulthood. Throughout their adolescence,

academic success was the only thing on their minds and sexual diversions were taboo; consequently many young men are virgins who are terrified of being with a woman. Most of these young male virgins are incapable of psychologically separating themselves from their mothers and find having sex with a mature, developed woman to be a terrifying threat. Their response is to become attracted to "unmotherly" women, innocent, undeveloped pre-pubescent girls who do not constitute a threat (Buckley 183).

In Japan, the *rorikon* "boom" started in the early 1980s when collections of young girls dressed in school uniforms and later nothing at all began to appear in pornographic magazines (Buckley 183). It is interesting to note, however, that the Japanese fascination with young girls (and boys) is not limited to this century; the pleasure quarters of the Edo Period were home for many underage prostitutes. One might say that the current phenomenon of teenage prostitution is simply a variation on an old theme since underage prostitutes were available in times past. What is unique in recent years is the distinct preference for service providers of a specific age and the motivation on the part of their clients. This *rorikon* "boom" continues strongly today with images of uniformed high school girls no longer limited to magazines but also on the Internet through web sites and chat rooms. *Enjo kôsai* being carried out by *joshikôsei baishunfu* is a manifestation of the *rorikon* desire wherein young girls are the favored commodity with which to interact.

*Rorikon zoku* ("Lolita complex gangs") consist of older men who have a fetish for teenage girls. These men cater to their fetishes by purchasing school



girl magazines which contain lusty confessions and unabashed letters to the editor sent in by precocious girls on topics such as favorite sexual positions and new ideas for masturbation (Constantine 187). This is ironic, because the fantasy of young, virginal girls is what attracts these older men, although that is not what is being portrayed in these magazines when the girls frankly discuss their favorite sexual positions.

Another reason Japanese men might pursue sex with teenage girls is that they naively view underage prostitutes as amateurs and inexperienced; not like the "professionals" they would encounter in a massage parlor. Deflowering what they think to be an innocent virgin adds an extra sexual thrill and caters to a familiar fantasy for many men to prove their virility. High school girls are much more desirable to men not wanting to be with a "jaded" adult prostitute or an adulterous housewife. There is another psychological factor to consider, however, which is that men do not need to worry about their sexual technique or lack thereof if their partner is inexperienced. Furthermore, there is a general belief among Japanese men that young girls are disease free, which makes them even more attractive as dates. However, this is a risky and incorrect assumption. According to Dr. Matsuzawa Masayuki, the director of Tokyo's Shinjuku Sakura Medical Clinic, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's) are on the rise among older men in Japan especially Chlamydia, which is generally found among young females (Schreiber).

### **Mother may I? Maternalizing wives**

Besides the fact that they have very little time with their wives at home, why do Japanese men hesitate to develop sexual relationships with their spouses? Many adult Japanese males seem to "escape" their overbearing mothers in their childhood but later end up marrying a woman just like their mothers. Once married, the husband begins to call his wife *okâsan* ("mother") and it is as if his wife truly becomes his mother.

According to Miyamoto (188), in their search for spouses, Japanese men are not looking for witty companions but the traditional "good wife and wise mother," a woman who will devote herself to him just like his mother did in childhood. Jolivet (1965-66) explains that men's attitudes evolved less quickly than women's in Japan as they still expect their wives to put the bedding out to air in the sunshine and to prepare their meals and baths with the same devotion as their mothers did. Miyamoto (188) further asserts that Japanese men subconsciously distrust women and try to compensate for their weaknesses by coupling with a strong motherly woman.

Therefore, men terrified of mature women would naturally be sexually attracted to high school prostitutes as these girls are the epitome of "unmotherly" and childish, innocent, fragile, and non-threatening. Married Japanese men undergo a process of "desocialization" wherein they revert to the womb at a time when their relationship with women was not sexually charged and they are coddled. If the husband views his wife as a mother figure, then how likely is it that he will want to be sexually intimate with her? Wives have been

"desexualized" and placed into a sexless mother role. It is interesting to note that once a woman gets married and has a child her wardrobe changes from her single days. She is expected to be demure and not dress in flashy or sexy clothes but rather in an apron. She must behave appropriately and personify a motherly image.

In journalist Ieda Shôko's 1998 book Sekkasuresu na Otokotachi she interviews men who are no longer carrying on sexual relations with their wives due to a variety of reasons. One thirty-nine-year-old company employee states that the reason he can no longer sleep with his wife is because in his mind she has become his mother (98-103). As soon as a year after they were married they ceased all sexual relations and never socialized outside of the house together. For him, the mere thought of having sexual intercourse with his wife is nauseating as he finds her absolutely undesirable sexually and would feel as if he was committing incest with his mother.

It is uncommon for husbands and wives to socialize with each other in Japan. One of the few places a wife would accompany her husband to is an annual company-sponsored event such as an *undôkai* ("sports day") held in October wherein employees and their families participate in friendly sports competition to boost employee morale and harmony. Wives and children are responsible for bringing boxed lunches and are able to compete in the games but their presence is to support their husband/father (Japan Travel Bureau 100-01). For most company excursions family members are discouraged from attending

because the trip is meant to strengthen group solidarity. If an employee refused to attend, it would be frowned upon.

For a *sarariman* and his wife to be seen going out for a night on the town would be extremely odd. Firstly, unless older family members live close by the wife must stay at home with her children since placing her kids in the care of a stranger is almost unheard of. Generally, it is believed that the mother should stay at home until the baby grows up. Therefore, she is not extended invitations to social affairs since it is understood that she will not be able to find a babysitter (Condon 137). Secondly, men are obligated to socialize with clients and colleagues after work and on weekends to strengthen business relationships. Therefore, they have no time to go out with their wives and would be jeopardizing their career chances if they ignored opportunities to network or fortify their relationship with coworkers and most importantly, the boss. Husbands have their own social circles that do not include their wives and vice versa. Lastly, love in a "Western" (romantic) sense is not generally an integral part of a Japanese marriage. Rather, a marriage in Japan is regarded as a bonded relationship undertaken for economic or social reasons.

Traditionally, the samurai class regarded romance and matrimony as two separate entities. Personal feelings were irrelevant and sometimes antagonistic to the interests of the clan. If a man was desirous of romance or sex, he would visit the pleasure quarters. Sexual relations with wives were simply for procreation purposes. If two people did marry for love (such as peasants sometimes did in the past) they were thought disgraceful and looked down upon (Buruma 38-40).

The samurai mentality has strongly influenced modern Japan and love, albeit increasingly desirable today, is not deemed essential for a marriage. Even after World War Two, when the American occupational forces introduced their cultural values of "love marriage" in Japan, most marriages were still arranged by matchmakers and parents. This practice continues.

Sexual desire is seen as something that belongs outside of home relegated to the play sphere. Sexual intercourse with one's spouse gradually disappears from marriage. Marriage and a family in Japan are a prerequisite for respectability and they are necessary steps in the course of adult life (Buruma 38-40). Marriage and family as obligatory commitments may turn many men to prostitution as a way of fulfilling their needs. For those men, teenage prostitutes play a triple role of mother, wife, and child and are able to understand and take care of a man's sexual needs without demanding a longtime contract of marriage. Johns buy into this fantasy and realize that there is no pressure to perform (as long as the girl gets her money she is satisfied) so they are free to regress to a pubescent state. Simply, prostitutes are surrogate wives that offer mental, emotional, and sexual counseling/comfort.

#### **Waiting to exhale: *settai* the stress reliever**

With a negligible family life and all of the stresses of working life, when and where do *sarariman* ever get to blow off steam? Their free time is usually spent with colleagues and superiors trying to develop closer, more harmonious relationships. Drinking with peers and complaining about the boss is a stress reliever for those enduring a harsh schedule and demanding superiors (Japan



Travel Bureau 28-29). Many men seek to alleviate stress by chain smoking and heavily drinking alcohol, which eventually taxes their system to the point of debility.

*Sararîman* must completely devote themselves to their corporate "family" and are often required to attend after hours business meetings to entertain clients in hostess bars (Japan Travel Bureau 80). Company employees learn that the boundaries are often blurred between work and play. By using hostess clubs as their venue to entertain clients after hours, the corporation has sanctioned and promoted the patronage of the sex industry. Corporations have generous *kôsaihi* ("entertainment expense accounts") to which they can write off expenses for *settai* in hostess clubs or other *mizu shôbai* establishments as a necessary business action.

Employees are socialized to accept that the suitable venue to release work stress is not with their families at home, but with women in the sex industry. Comfort and relief are provided through bar hostesses listening to *sararîman*'s woes, massaging their egos and flirting with them, lighting their cigarettes and pouring their drinks (Allison *Nightwork* 63-68). In general, providing sympathy and catering to their needs (sometimes sexual, although only if the man has enough money to become an outside patron/boyfriend). Engaging in *enjo kôsai* can also be seen as an extension of the relief sought in after-hours clubs by company employees. When there is a need for more personal, one-on-one service, and the almost certain guarantee of sexual relations even after only one encounter, teenage prostitutes are the answer for such requirements. There is no

fear of rejection when entering into a hostess bar or participating in *enjo kôsai* because money is the passport to acceptance.

According to Miyamoto (64), men deal in *tatemae* ("feelings shown on the outside") and women in *honne*. If everyone verbalized what they thought constantly there would be big trouble in Japanese corporations. Women are not able to play a major role in society and bureaucrats and corporations must protect the notion that women should be submissive to men.

This is ironic since once men let their guard down when inebriated, or when they visit prostitutes they soon reveal their *honne*. The highly hierarchical nature of Japanese society and the corporation is conducive to tension releasing activities such as drinking in hostess bars. Employees are socialized to endure hardship day after day and not express dissatisfaction or anger. However, the more one represses their emotions the more they intensify. Sooner or later these toxic emotions will need to be released otherwise a blow-up will occur. Corporate heads are not blind to this fact; they realize that inviting employees for an after work drink will allow them a chance to let off some steam and become a better employee because of it.

Miyamoto (61-62) notes that the more quiet and sober a *sarariman* is ordinarily, the more he will let loose at a banquet or after work function under the influence of alcohol. From a psychoanalytical point of view the more one gives the impression of being quiet, serious and well adjusted the more likely that person is to have an accumulation of stress. Letting it all hang out and releasing tension by drinking with the boys after work allows for a temporary transgression

of social boundaries, the criticism of one's boss and outlandish behavior is accepted under the guise of drunkenness. The next day all is forgiven (unless an enormous transgression is committed) and work continues as usual.

However, *settai* is not always free from all tension. It can also be mental torture for many employees since they are being treated to entertainment by the very same people that hold power over them: their bosses and prospective clients. Therefore, the employee must be on his best behavior and very careful how he treats his superiors. There are usually multiple rounds of *settai* in one evening. The first and second round of *settai* consists of ingratiating oneself and currying the favor of the guest of honor wherein it is impossible just to relax and be oneself (which is what already takes place at the office on a daily basis). Men are subjected to more demeaning behavior even when they have supposedly entered the entertainment sphere. The third round of *settai* which possibly takes place with friends once the clients have gone home, is where one is able to let it all hang out and get completely inebriated if they so choose. It is only then that these regular employees are allowed to be complimented by hostesses and can begin to release their tension with women.

The hostesses must be extremely adept at who to compliment and who not to; for an esteemed client to be ignored while a lowly employee was fawned over would be unforgivable. A good hostess knows exactly how much flattery and attention to give each customer and understands the power dynamics of the group. All men must be made to feel worthy no matter what their position, and this is precisely the purpose that the *mizu shôbai* serves (Allison Nightwork 175).

Miyamoto (64-65) asserts that many men have extremely conservative ideas about women and think that they should be relegated to domestic sphere except for women whose service is to please men sexually such as bar hostesses and geisha. The old belief of *danson johi* (men are superior women inferior) is alive and well in the Japanese bureaucracy and corporations alike. Pornographic magazines and strip tease shows are prevalent on company sponsored trips and most men want to talk about the female anatomy and sex. Perhaps it can be said that many *sararîman* turn to their fixation on the female genitalia and sex with prostitutes as a necessary ingredient that releases the stress from their daily lives.

#### **The compartmentalization of *sararîman*'s lives**

Japanese men split their relationships with women into two groups: wife and entertainer. Except for courting and honeymoon periods, men separate sex from their wives and home life and relegate it to the women in the play sphere only (Lebra 131). There has been a compartmentalization of the *sararîman*'s life in Japan. Family life never intersects with playtime, but work and play boundaries are blurred.

This compartmentalization is aptly demonstrated in one scene from the movie Baunsu ko Gals. In a crowded Tokyo railway station a middle-aged *sararîman* wearing a suit and tie slyly approaches a young girl in school uniform toting a backpack. He grabs her arm aggressively as she descends the stairs and barks at her, "How about ¥30,000? I know you're going to Shibuya (a popular Tokyo area hang out for young people) to peddle your ass. Don't play innocent with me! A date club won't pay you that much!" She squirms and tells him to let

go of her as she manages to free herself from his tight grip. As she flees down the stairs he is visibly agitated and yells at her, "I know you're a little whore!" Just then, his cellular phone rings and he answers it. Upon finding out that the caller is his wife, he cheerfully greets her, "Hi honey, I just arrived in Tokyo."

*Sarariman* have learned to vent their feelings with female sex workers instead of their families and have transcended the work boundary of hostesses into the play boundary with teenage girls. Underage prostitutes have become surrogate sex partners, mental counselors, and nostalgic lovers from a lost childhood. The pressure from work and alienation from their family leads many men to buying sex. Late at night, when a man returns home exhausted from a long day at work to everyone sleeping in his house, he is unable to discuss the stresses of the day with anyone. Sex workers boost the confidence of wives since they can look down on them for doing the lowest jobs such as taking care of men's sexual needs and being outlets for pent-up stress. The *mizu shōbai* produces self worth in already emasculated men and it serves a significant purpose both sociologically and psychologically.

In describing some of the reasons why men choose to patronize the sex industry, Registered Nurse and adult video actress Nina Hartley (72-74) suggests that men generally have few or no socially approved non-sexual outlets to experience caring and human contact and are deprived of the human touch. Sex workers can provide johns with comfort, recognition, and acceptance. Johns come to them seeking absolution, approval, understanding, compassion, kindness, and caring from a willing and friendly woman. Because these women are



deliberately open and sexual, men unknowingly make use of their services as therapists. They reveal very personal and private thoughts without thinking that the woman might find them offensive or may reveal their secrets to another. A man's relief in finally being able to simply talk to someone without being judged for the first time in his life is evident. The average person is still very immature when it comes to their sexuality. All of their fears, insecurities, and low self-esteem are combined and manifested sexually; they yearn to be known fundamentally accepted if only for a passing moment. Although Hartley's account is based on her experience in the United States, due to a similar prevalence of prostitution, her interpretation can be applied to the Japanese case.

**Show me the money!**

Hostess bars do not usually provide sexual satisfaction for men as men are not permitted to have sexual relations with a hostess while inside the club. For some men who want immediate sexual satisfaction, there are a few options depending on time and budget restraints. Men who have the money to patronize *ime kura* or Soapland are more likely looking for a quick sexual fix and there is not as much pressure for them to perform sexually as they are footing the bill. Women provide the service for men without reciprocation. But this option is costly and usually only middle-aged men are able to afford such an outing (younger men do not earn as much and are preoccupied with saving money in order to start a family). Patronizing the sex industry can be expensive, and one's identity is not hidden.

Men who can not afford to pay for sex have the option of becoming a *chikan* since it is free and anonymous and also substitutes as a form of relief of sexual tension and stress. They might also purchase relatively inexpensive pornographic magazines or used schoolgirls' panties but this does not provide full physical interaction with another human being and might leave them unfulfilled.

The men that yearn for the combination of companionship and sexual gratification indulge in *enjo kô sai*. This option can be less costly as compared to visiting both a hostess club for companionship and Soapland for sex. However, if *enjo kô sai* becomes a weekly pursuit that involves buying expensive gifts in exchange for affection, then the average *sararîman* would be unable to afford it on such a small allowance. He would need to devise alternative sources of funding to engage in *enjo kô sai* on a regular basis. Tapping into a padded expense account will only work if an employee is accompanying his boss for *settai* to hostess club, as an average employee would not have access to company expense accounts.

Since wives hold the purse strings in Japan and dole out allowance to husbands, husbands may have to save their weekly allowances to treat themselves to a date with a teenage prostitute. It may be possible that with their weekly allowance, men do not use it at all but make their own savings account secretly from which they are free to withdraw as they please. If they do not wish to be bothered to open up a personal savings account, another option might be to secretly withdraw small amounts of money from their joint bank account every week. It is easier for smaller amounts to go undetected. If the wife does detect

the withdrawals later on when reviewing monthly household expenses, husbands can fib and explain that the money was used to purchase golf clubs to join the boss for weekend golf games or they can claim that additional personal expenses were needed for a company trip.

The time factor involved in pursuing dates is equally perplexing. If these men are such workaholics then when do they have time for paid dates except for maybe their lunch or coffee break? One *sararîman* used to take teenage girls on dates during his lunch break only if they could eat at restaurants close to his work (Hara 212-13). Perhaps some men leave *settai* early one night a month to go out to *karaoke* with a girl. Others might fib to their wives that they need to go out with the boss on a Saturday afternoon and instead call *tere kura* looking for a date. Throughout the 1990s up to the present day, many *sararîman* have engaged or are currently engaging in *enjo kôsai* as a way to fulfill their needs regardless of a lack of funds or time. Conducting individual surveys on how *sararîman* who engage in *enjo kôsai* are able to afford the time and money to do so would prove helpful in considering areas for future research.

## CONCLUSION

### Boy today, john tomorrow?

The affluence that Japan attained especially during the 1980s Bubble Economy era ushered in the desire for instant gratification and the general acceptance of hyper-consumerism. Although the bubble has burst and Japan's economy has undergone significant restructuring, many of the leisurely pursuits and attitudes of wealthier times still prevail. In an age of increasing alienation from others, money is the way to console loneliness through the purchase of companionship.

*Sarariman* are alienated from their families, ill-equipped to socialize with the opposite sex, and have no sense of identity other than belonging to the company. Many middle-aged *sarariman* operate as repeat clients of the flourishing and multi-faceted domestic (and sometimes overseas) sex industry in hopes of securing well-needed comfort and acceptance which is lacking in their everyday lives. Upon reaching middle age, many Japanese men become active participants of the flesh trade.

This transformation is a lifelong process, which starts from early childhood on through to adolescent experience and subsequent corporate socialization. These men have extremely limited time for leisurely pursuits, as they must constantly concern themselves with the needs of bosses during and after work hours. Participating in *settai* in after hours meetings held at bars and clubs in order to strengthen business relationships a common requirement of the job.

Future *sarariman* endure tremendous stress throughout their youth and adult lives with virtually no outlet to relieve their tension. They have become a product of the ubiquitous three "I's": *ijime* ("bullying"), *ibiri* ("abuse" or "harsh treatment"), and *iyagarase* ("harassment"). As children, they must sacrifice the usual activities of childhood in the name of achievement as they engage in intense, stressful scholastic competition in order to get the best grades, and attend privately owned and operated cram and preparatory schools after normal school hours. All of these sacrifices are endured in order to enter into a reputable university and ultimately, a respected corporation.

Throughout their adolescence and adulthood, they are taught to defer to their superiors, withstand criticism and verbal harassment from *senpai* (members of society or a group that is senior in either rank or age) which often turns into physical bullying. They must also work upwards of twelve hours a day.

Because they keep such long work hours they are often alienated from their wives and children who become used to their absence. Upon their return home, which can be well after midnight, the *sarariman* has little energy to devote to the maintenance of his relationship with his children and wife; he often mutters to his spouse, "*Meshi, furo, neru!*" ("food, bath, bed") and collapses into an exhausted sleep (Cherry 62).

*Sarariman* view being with a high school prostitute as the necessary and deserved time to receive assurance and acceptance. It can also be used as a partial surrogate for his ignored marriage and relationship with his children.



Youth is associated with purity and beauty in Japan (Buruma 66-67). What better way for a middle-aged man to capture the fountain of youth than to spend time with a seemingly virginal, innocent high school girl who can cater to his desires? There are a number of high school girls who are willing to participate in the trade to satisfy their material greed.

Despite all of this, the question remains, why do young Japanese men who have lived through the absent father syndrome, continue to enter the corporation and lead a similar lifestyle to their fathers? Some are afraid that if they assert their individual needs and embark on a career counter to the societal norm then they will be ostracized. Others might see prostitution as a bonus to their corporate lifestyle.

Furthermore, when current news reports detail more and more cases of high school prostitution occurring across the country, why are parents and the educational system still reluctant to get into a frank discussion about sex and sexuality with youth so as to prevent possible johnhood and prostitution later on? Some parents and educators may find it easier to turn a blind eye to the situation rather than open up dialogue on the uncomfortable subject. Others feel that the phenomenon of teenage prostitution will eventually disappear. Seemingly, this is not the case. In order to keep up with the constant demand for *enjo kôgai* and cater to current fads, the latest development in Japan is Internet dating conducted through special web sites and chat rooms (Hagio). The computer age has allowed for the further proliferation of child pornography. Now johns can engage in "virtual" *enjo kôgai* from the privacy of their own homes or on street corners

using the latest cellular phone services. Are boys and men currently being socialized to practice "virtual" patronage of the sex industry as a precursor to actual participation?

*Enjo kôsai* is a prevalent and continuing problem in Japanese society today. Approximately five percent (Suemasu 11) of 2.1 million high school girls (Nihon Tôkei 694) in Japan may be engaging in *enjo kôsai*. Exact statistics on Japanese johns are nonexistent. Taking into account the approximate number of high school prostitutes in Japan and presuming they all have clients, the range of possible estimates available for johns appears quite high. Furthermore, a large number of potential customers exist who are not yet going on dates but instead view child pornography on the Internet or in videos and magazines. This is not a passing phase in which a limited number of people are participating.

What remains to be seen is if the largest number of participants in *enjo kôsai*, *sararîman*, will continue to be socialized by the corporation to enjoy after hours recreation in the *mizu shôbai* (a precursor to seeking sexual healing with the girls and women of the *shasei sangyô*). When will company heads develop genuine concern for the welfare of their employees? When will the average company man take a stand and express an interest in his home family more so than his corporate "family" so that he does not have to search for a surrogate wife/daughter in a teenage prostitute? Children continue to be left without role models when they read about "respectable" members of society such as teachers, policemen, judges, and dentists, being apprehended for soliciting prostitution from teenage girls.

In the postwar period, Japanese salaried men became corporate samurai first, then transformed themselves into sexual samurai. They no longer wield swords but ballpoint pens, and have shifted their focus from the demands of the corporation to the demands of their psyche and penises. Engaging in *enjo kôsai* is the chance for them to be rewarded for their lifelong years of self-sacrifice and service to others. Teenage girls have become a favorable commodity for lonely and horny adult men. It is insulting to assume that all men are inherently potential johns. In Japan, the educational system, corporate socialization, and family life create an atmosphere where businessmen desire the comfort that can only be procured through compensated dating. This is not simply an individual level phenomenon. Instead, I have shown that the structure of Japanese society encourages participation in this segment of the sex industry. Without addressing these structural influences on *sararîman*'s behavior, there will likely be little change in the prevalence and continuance of *enjo kôsai* in Japan.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> A sampling of titles include: Nicholas Bornoff's popular book Pink Samurai, John Morley's Pictures from the Water Trade, Steven Clemens's Tokyo Pink Guide (which includes detailed maps of several favorite establishments and a glossary of industry terminology), Peter Constantine's Japan's Sex Trade: A Journey Through Japan's Erotic Subcultures, and Donald Richie's Tokyo Nights. All of the authors listed above are foreign men who have lived in Japan and write for a foreign audience. It is no coincidence that all of the authors are men because they cater to an audience with erections. To the best of my knowledge, no scholarly research has yet been undertaken on post World War Two Japan's sex industry.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen and Ethel Longstreet's Yoshiwara: The Pleasure Quarters of Old Tokyo is written for a general audience. It is a detailed account of the rise and fall of the Yoshiwara and characterizes the social and sexual conduct of Edo residents. Cecilia Seigle's Yoshiwara: The Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan is an academic reference work that examines the social conditions of life in the Yoshiwara and highlights the customs and etiquette of geisha.

<sup>3</sup> Some of these publications include: Lisa Louis's Butterflies of the Night: Mama-sans, Geisha, Strippers, and the Japanese Men They Serve (although the title incorporates the male patrons, the book devotes very little attention to them and focuses instead on the women who provide their services), Murakami Ryû's novel Rabu & Poppu: Topâzu II, Sakai Ayumi's Nemuranai Onna: Hiru wa Futsuu no Shakaijin, Yoru ni Naru to Fûzokujô, and Ieda Shôko's Baburu to Neta Onnatachi.

<sup>4</sup> Anthropologist Anne Allison wrote about her experience as an undercover hostess in Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure, and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club. While the book does commendably discuss at length the significant relationship of the corporate employee and the sexual entertainment industry, it is an ethnographic study of only one hostess club in Tokyo. Another ethnography on the high-end of the "water trade," Liza Dalby, also an anthropologist, wrote a detailed account of her time spent living among Japan's geisha community in Geisha.

<sup>5</sup> The National Police Agency in Japan publishes an annual report on crime called Keisatsuhakusho ("White Paper on police activity"). Very limited, ambiguous information is listed on patrons involved in the unlawful purchase of sex. The felony of purchasing sex is lumped together along with various other sexual offences (such as public indecency) under the vague category entitled "moral



offences." Therefore, it is impossible to differentiate the exact number of johns from the other "moral offenders." With regard to statistics on underage sex providers, these are listed in a section under the category of "female minors taken into police custody for deviant sexual acts with motivation of earning money to play." View their web site at: <http://www.npa.go.jp/index.htm> wherein annual crime reports are listed for the years 1973 until present.

<sup>6</sup> The term "salaried men" includes businessmen but is not limited to that occupation. A salaried man is a white-collar worker, such as a corporate employee, but also includes public sector employees such as teachers, policemen, bureaucrats, and judges, to name a few.

<sup>7</sup> *Hentai-anime* has also become popular outside of Japan. Recently, a comprehensive, A to Z viewer's guide on Japanese erotic animation was published with detailed reviews and ratings. See Helen McCarthy and Jonathan Clements's The Erotic Anime Movie Guide.

<sup>8</sup> The latest development on the *kyabarê* scene is the *kyaba kura* (abbreviation of "Cabaret Club"). *Kyaba kura* employ women in their early twenties to entertain male clients (mostly *sararîman*) with conversation and some light physical flirtation, order expensive snacks and drinks on the clients' tab, and often introduce their "friends" (coworkers) to the group. "Friendship" between clients and the women is emphasized and any form of sexual relations inside the club is prohibited. Often a woman will ask for the client's phone number so that she can contact him and ask him to come "visit" her at the club again or to go out on a date. The appeal of these establishments is that although the treatment of the client is virtually the same as a hostess club, the women are not considered "professionals" and therefore the men believe they have a chance at making a "real" love connection. On March 22, 2001, an episode entitled "Kyaba Kura Ningenmoyô" ("Cabaret-club scene") aired on the controversial television program Koko ga Hendayo Nihonjin ("Here are weird things about the Japanese"). This episode was devoted entirely to the issue of women working in *kyaba kura*. The weekly program is taped in a downtown Tokyo television studio. Depending on the episode, anywhere from fifty to one hundred disgruntled and opinionated foreigners currently living in Japan are invited to participate in the show. Various contentious topics in Japanese society are presented and offered for debate. Subjects of past shows include school bullying, religious cults, teenage prostitution, homosexuality, and xenophobia, to name a few. The famous Japanese comedian/actor/director Kitano "Beat" Takeshi is the show's moderator and sits in the middle of a panel comprised of four other Japanese celebrities (and sometimes foreign celebrities living in Japan long term such as athletes). At the beginning of the show, the particular episode's topic is announced and the special guests engaging in the topic are invited to sit facing the foreign and Japanese panels. The foreigners are encouraged to verbalize their



opinions on Japanese society and engage in heated debates with the guests and the Japanese panel members. On some occasions, the heated debate has escalated into a physical altercation.

<sup>9</sup> The 1992 movie *Okoge* stunned Japanese audiences with its explicit depiction of gay male sex scenes and frank discussion of the taboo subject of homosexuality in Japanese society. The film is about a young straight woman who befriends a gay male couple and offers them the use of her apartment for those times when they are unable find a place to be alone and make love. The couple consists of a young leatherworker and an older, married businessman who keeps his homosexuality hidden from both his family and colleagues. The woman ends up falling in love with the younger man and asks him to help raise her baby (fathered by an abusive ex-boyfriend). The film is a semi-autobiographical account of director Nakajima's life. Nakajima was married to a woman for eighteen years and concealed his homosexuality. When he finally came out of the closet he lost both his marriage and his family.

<sup>10</sup> While statistics on the exact number of Japanese johns are nonexistent, the very fact that "entertainment districts" which house businesses offering sexual services targeted at male consumers continue to thrive in both major and smaller cities throughout Japan is testament to the existence of more than an insignificant number of johns.

<sup>11</sup> The GNP serves as a measure of a country's economic activity in all sectors and reflects the total amount of value created in the production of goods and services in a country.

<sup>12</sup> Beasley (227-28) mentions that this was a derogatory term coined by overseas critics of Japan's highly disciplined approach to relations with the outside world. The term also implies that in Japan, business interests took precedence over all else and had a disproportionate influence over national policy.

<sup>13</sup> According to Schilling (32), this expression is a play on words. The Three Sacred Treasures were comprised of the mirror, sword, and jewel and were handed down as tokens of imperial rule since ancient times.

<sup>14</sup> According to Sugiura and Gillespie (224), the term refers to an economy that has inflated beyond its actual value and is based on "land centrism." In Japan, urban land is so limited compared to demand that real property is regarded as the most secure asset.

<sup>15</sup> These sex tours actually became available as soon as Japan Airlines (JAL) began regularly scheduled flights to Southeast Asia in the 1960s. However, the popularity of the tours did not increase until the 1970s.

<sup>16</sup> The *shinkansen* extends throughout the main island of Honshu and can travel at speeds up to 300 kilometers per hour.

<sup>17</sup> Some more popular titles include: James Fallows's Looking at the Sun: The Rise of the New East Asian Economic and Political System, Chalmers Johnson's MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925 - 1975, and Richard Katz's Japan, the System that Soured: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese Economic Miracle.

<sup>18</sup> The Japanese are notorious for referring to themselves as all being of the same mindset, ethnicity, origin, etc. When solicited for an opinion, some individuals may often begin sentences with "*ware ware Nihonjin*" ("we Japanese"). Other ethnic groups residing in Japan, such as the Koreans, Chinese, Ainu, and Okinawans are conveniently ignored and do not factor into the "homogenous" equation. Homogeneity is a loaded term in the case of Japan. Many anthropological studies and literature that focus on Japan stress that their cultural beliefs of strong group-orientation, rigid hierarchical social order, high value on harmony, consensus and loyalty to the group all contribute to the homogeneity of Japanese society. Recently, these anthropological studies have come under attack by scholars due to the reexamination of the concept of "homogeneity" and the recognition that behind the meaning there was definite political motivation. According to Marfording (433-39), from 1868 the Meiji state sought to consolidate unification, institutionalize and safeguard a secure state power over the population, and prevent open opposition by discontented members of society. One way to do so was to propagate the ideology that the Japanese state was a family headed by the Emperor to whom subjects owed absolute obedience and loyalty. A "homogeneous" nation in which its subjects followed the same inflicted patriarchal cultural values benefited the nation's leaders tremendously. Even today, the Japanese government is continually committed to the cultural ideals of harmony, consensus, and loyalty to the group. This is apparent in the educational system through the required teaching of the national anthem and respect for the flag, as well as government control and censorship of textbooks.

<sup>19</sup> Nakamura Satoshi broke new ground on the subject of homelessness by publishing a revealing book Danbôru Hausu de Miru Yume. The author based the book on personal interviews conducted with homeless people living in Shinjuku.

<sup>20</sup> Rey Ventura opened readers' eyes with his candid, personal account of being a Filipino migrant construction worker in Japan. See Underground in Japan.

<sup>21</sup> For a Western perspective on the involvement of Canadian girls in the hostess industry over the past decade see Penelope Buitenhuis's documentary Tokyo Girls which is available for purchase through the National Film Board of Canada.

<sup>22</sup> According to Havis (48-49), Harada was so appalled to learn that Japanese men were buying used underwear from teenage girls as a sexual stimulus that it provoked him to make this film. The film is shot in semi-documentary form as Harada interviewed actual teenage prostitutes and gave a few of them minor roles in the film.

<sup>23</sup> In Japan, *karaoke* (literally "empty orchestra") service is offered in a bar, club, or a specialized establishment with many with private rooms (called "*karaoke* box") wherein one sings the lyrics of a song of his or her choice displayed on a television monitor while accompanied by the appropriate background music. Snacks and drinks are readily available and delivered to the room by the wait staff. The machinery is quite high-tech and one can request to be rated after he or she sings, adjust the tempo and tune of the music, and the echo, bass, or treble in his or her voice. Instruments such as a tambourine or maracas are left in the room to encourage the singer's friends to join in and musically accompany the song being performed. The whole *karaoke*-going experience has often been praised as a relatively innocuous stress-reliever as well as a safe way for people to perform unashamedly in a group-oriented environment.

<sup>24</sup> According to Okura (60), four Japanese male freelance writers who call themselves the "Asian Sexual Customs Research Group" wrote the controversial handbook on prostitution in Thailand. The book can be found in Japan at both major and neighborhood bookstores. The first fifteen thousand copies sold out almost completely within five months. See Ajia Seifūzoku Kenkyūkai.

<sup>25</sup> *Tere kura* began in Tokyo in 1985. A *tere kura* is a place where male clients must pay to enter either a booth (with dividers so that each division has a phone and chair) or an individual room and wait for girls from outside the club to call in. There is no charge for the girls to call in and use the service. The two can talk for an unlimited time about any topic they choose. Most often the purpose of the conversation is to determine compatibility, and if the two find each other appealing through their chat, then they can set up a date. For girls, setting a date is relatively easy since there is such an abundance of male clients on a nightly basis. Membership for men starts at approximately ¥2,000 (US\$16) and the hourly rate to engage in conversation is ¥3,000 (US\$24) (Maruta "Komyunikēshon" 118; Inoue 98-99).

<sup>26</sup> "Date clubs" are frequented by male clients who must pay an entrance fee to gain access to the club's services. Once inside, they are able to choose from a number of women of all ages already waiting inside the club to go on a "date" outside. It is strictly up to both parties as to what sort of activities are allowed on their "date."

<sup>27</sup> For examples of this type of reporting see Kawai and Moffett.

<sup>28</sup> See Inoue, Kuronuma, and Sawada.

<sup>29</sup> According to the 2001 Japan Statistical Yearbook, in 1999, there were a total of 4.212 million high school students in the entire country of Japan. Out of that number, 2.113 million students were male and the remaining 2.1 million students were female. In Suemasu's publication, she cites a 1998 questionnaire on *enjo kôsai* taken by six hundred high school girls in Tokyo. Five percent of the girls responded that they had engaged in compensated dating and participated in all three of the following types of encounters: meeting for tea or going a date without sex, dating which included sexual contact or actions but not sexual intercourse, dating which included having sexual intercourse. I then applied the five percent figure to the entire Japanese female high school student population to come up with a probable number of girls currently engaging in compensated dating.

<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that these figures are highly underestimated because these were only the girls that were apprehended; for as many that were caught just as many got away without being taken into custody. Also, under the Japanese legal system, minors can not be arrested for criminal acts, only taken into custody and released later.

<sup>31</sup> There is a web site in Japanese entirely devoted to the subject of *pinku chirashi* called the "Pink Chirashi Art Collection." Approximately fifty different *pinku chirashi* have been collected and posted for public viewing on the web site. There is also written information explaining how the flyers are distributed as well as measures that have been taken by concerned members of the community to prevent their distribution. View the web site at:  
<http://www.bekkoame.ne.jp/~washi/pink/index.htm>

<sup>32</sup> *Dengon daiyaru* is similar to voice mail personals commonly seen in North American cities wherein men and women can leave a voice message on the system advertising whatever they choose. The client is given a P.I.N. (Personal Identification Number) so that they can access the system and check their messages. It is free for women to call but men must buy a "pay card" or pay fees in advance. *Tsû shotto daiyaru* is similar to a 900-line phone number in North America. There is a high per minute charge to call the number and then get connected to other callers waiting on the system. The latter became so popular among teenagers that attempts were successfully made to shut them down in order to discourage teenage prostitution. However, the same basic premise has been reinvented just under a new name. One example is a "two shot corner" which operates from within a *tere kura* and connects callers for one-on-one conversation (Inoue 102).



<sup>33</sup> There is such wide availability and usage of cellular phones in Japan that at the end of 1999, 56.85 million people (44.8 percent of the population) had mobile phone subscriptions. That figure is projected to increase to one hundred and three million subscribers which will equal eighty percent of the population in 2005 ("More Mobiles" 17). Cellular phones facilitate communication between girls engaging in *enjo kôgai* and their clients.

<sup>34</sup> One magazine article claims that Japan is the child pornography capital of the world. Japan is responsible for producing four-fifths of all the videos and magazines that show children in sexual situations ("The Darker Side of Cuteness" 32). Recent steps have been taken by authorities to curb child prostitution. In March 2000, legislation was passed banning the purchase of sex from anyone aged seventeen or younger. By enacting the new law, authorities hope to crack down on child pornography on the Internet as well ("Diet Enacts Tough Child-Sex, Porn Law"). In an effort to prevent high school students from using telephone clubs, the government passed a bill that revised a previous law that will prohibit anyone under the age of eighteen from using such services. Telephone operators must confirm that their clients are over eighteen when they call in. The new bill proposes that only after the women who are requesting to be connected to men have sent a fax of their identification documents to the telephone club operator, will they be allowed to use the service ("Law Revised to Prevent Minors"). It remains to be seen exactly how effective this new legislation will be.

<sup>35</sup> It is very difficult to sum up in a few words a precise definition of the complex concept of *amae*. For an in-depth explanation on *amae* see Doi's book The Anatomy of Dependence.

<sup>36</sup> Textbook revision is an extremely controversial issue in Japan. Many scholars and critics of Japan's role during World War Two have pointed out that among other atrocious incidences, historical events such as the Rape of Nanking and the case of Korean (and other nationalities) Comfort Women were edited from Japanese textbooks by the government. It is argued that the result is many young Japanese today are unaware of their country's true history (see Okano and Tsuchiya 46-47). To illustrate this point I would like to provide a personal example. When I was an exchange student at a Japanese college in 1996, I recall asking a group of eighteen-year-old students residing in the same dormitory as I if they were aware that Taiwan and Korea were former colonies of Japan. Not one of them answered yes. I do not wish to assert that this is the case for most Japanese, but nonetheless, it was interesting to witness the students' total unawareness of the subject.

<sup>37</sup> I extensively searched the Ministry of Education's official web site for any reference to sex education in schools and found nothing was mentioned. View their web site at: <http://www.mext.go.jp/index.htm>



<sup>38</sup> A Japan Times article in May 2001 ("Female Doctors to Get Training on Sex Education") mentioned that due to the increase in teenage pregnancy and subsequent abortions as well as the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, the Japanese Medical Women's Association soon plans to offer training to its members on teaching sex education to junior high and high school students. The association will recommend trained female doctors as sex education instructors for teens since they believe that the doctors who undergo the training will be better prepared to distribute information and advice than school teachers.

<sup>39</sup> I recently had the chance to casually discuss the subject of sex education with three of my Japanese female friends (aged twenty-eight to thirty-three). They all unanimously stated that when they were growing up sex education was very clinical and rudimentary and they were kept in separate classrooms from the boys. Furthermore, their families never discussed the topic and if they brought it up with their parents it would be embarrassing and shameful. I asked the same of a couple of male friends (aged twenty-six and twenty-eight) and they said exactly the same. I then inquired how they found out about sex and how not to get a girl pregnant and they both mentioned that friends and magazines helped to shed light on the subject. One male friend even showed me a copy of the popular young men's magazine called Hotdog wherein explicit instructions of how to put on a condom (on a banana) were included as a service to their readers.

<sup>40</sup> I was able to witness this firsthand on the train in Japan a number of times. One day while riding the train in Morioka, I sat next to a high school boy who was engrossed in an *ero manga*. I glanced over his shoulder to examine the comic book only to be confronted with violent image of a girl being tied up, raped, and then dismembered. The next page displayed her various body parts laying on the floor and her male torturer standing over them smiling.

<sup>41</sup> The mandatory retirement age in Japan is anywhere from fifty-five to sixty, although some people do stay on longer as consultants or commissioned workers at a lower salary.

<sup>42</sup> According to Sugiura and Gillespie (156-57), *ochûgen* refers to gifts sent by individuals and businesses from early to mid July. *Oseibo* is sent in the middle of December and signifies gratitude for kindness shown throughout the year, so the cost of the gift is significantly more than *ochûgen*. Department stores as well as local convenience stores showcase a variety of goods for such occasions. Gifts can range from a seasonal assortment of fruits, gourmet rice crackers, soy sauce, or tea. In Japan, the custom of exchanging gifts preserves the harmony of human relationships. A person who does not bestow gifts (especially in a business situation where client relations are of the utmost importance) when they are

supposed to is considered ignorant of moral obligation and lacking in culture and gratitude.

<sup>43</sup> Besides health drinks, gum loaded with caffeine and other stimulants is widely sold to "refresh" the mind and body. Eye-drops containing simulated menthol to wake up tired eyes are also readily available and commonly used. Also, practically every vending machine across the country stocks canned coffee because it is so frequently and widely consumed. If one needs a nicotine buzz to get him or her going, cigarettes are also available for purchase in vending machines and are inexpensive.

## GLOSSARY OF JAPANESE TERMS

*aisha seishin* 愛社精神 : the spirit of an employee's loyalty to his company

*amae* 甘え : emotional dependence of child to mother or subordinate to superior

*bari bari* ばりばり : adjective and verb expressing "aggressively digesting the workload"; also used as an adjective that describes the sound of violently breaking something

*boku* 僕 : personal pronoun, "I"; commonly used among middle and upper class men and boys

*burû manshon* ブールマンション : lodging named for the blue plastic tarp used by inhabitants to cover their dwelling

*burû sêrâ* ブルーセーラー : abbreviation of "bloomers" and "sailor suits"; recently, the word has been used to refer to a shop where women's and high school girls' used panties and sailor-suit school uniforms are sold

*chikan* 痴漢 : "pervert"; often refers to a man groping women and girls on crowded trains and subways, or touching women's buttocks in the workplace or on streets.

*dانبôru mura* 段ボール村 : "cardboard villages" where homeless people live

*danson johi* 男尊女卑 : an expression of an ideology, "men are superior women inferior"

*dengon daiyaru* 伝言ダイヤル : message system/voice mail telephone sex line

*deru kui wa utareru* 出る杭は打たれる : idiom, "the stake that sticks up will be pounded down"

*enjo kôsai* 援助交際 : "compensated dating"; a euphemism for teenage prostitution; *enjo* literally means "financial aid" and *kôsai* literally means "dating"

*ero manga* エロ漫画 : erotic or pornographic comic books

*gakureki shakai* 学歴社会 : "academic credential society" where school affiliation is considered to be one of the critical aspects of social stratification

*gaman suru* 我慢する : verb, "to endure hardship"

*ganbaru* 頑張る : verb, "to persist" or "persevere" or "do one's absolute best"; commonly used as a phrase to cheer someone on in athletics or declare one's determination before embarking on a task/duty

*gasshuku* 合宿 : "training camps"

*gempatsu jipushi* 原発ジプシー : "nuclear power plant gypsies"; workers engaged in dirty and dangerous work at nuclear power plants under part-time or seasonal contracts

*Hanamuko Gakkô* 花婿学校 : "the bridegroom school"

*Hanamuko Kôza* 花婿講座 : "the bridegroom course"

*hentai anime* 変態アニメ : erotic or pornographic animated films

*herusu* ヘルス : abbreviation of "Fashion Health"; a place where more discounted sexual services are offered than Soapland; vaginal intercourse is forbidden but anal intercourse is allowed

*home* 本音 : "true feelings" or "honest opinion"

*ibiri* いびり : "abuse" or "harsh treatment" or "continuous torment inflicted upon the socially inferior by the socially dominant"

*ichiryû kô* 一流校 : "first rate school"

*ijime* いじめ : "bullying"

*ime kura* イメクラ : abbreviation of "Image Club"; a place where women dress up in outfits tailored to their clients' fantasies such as secretaries, nurses, schoolgirls, etc. and then perform their requested roles while offering sexual massage, oral sex, and vaginal intercourse

*iyagarase* 嫌がらせ : "harassment"

*joshidaisei baishunfu* 女子大生売春 : "female university student prostitutes"

*joshikôsei baishunfu* 女子高生売春婦 : "female high school prostitutes"

*jukensensô* 受験戦争 : "examination wars"

*juku* 塾 : "cram school"; privately owned and operated

*junketsu kyôiku* 純潔教育 : "purity education"

*kaisha ningen* 会社人間 : "company man" or "man devoted to his company"

*karaoke* カラオケ : literally "empty orchestra"; takes place at a bar, club, or social establishment equipped with private rooms wherein one sings the lyrics of a song of his or her choice displayed on a television monitor while accompanied by the appropriate background music

*karôshi* 過労死 : "death from overwork"

*kateinai rikon* 家庭内離婚 : "divorce within the household" or "a situation where a couple ceases to be husband and wife without filing for divorce or separating their domicile"

*kazoku sâbisu* 家族サービス : "the family service"; also refers to a father entertaining his family members by taking them out to the playground, etc.

*kôsaihi* 交際費 : "corporate entertainment expense accounts"

*koyuna* 小湯女 : literally "small hot water woman"; euphemism for Kamakura Period apprentice bathhouse masseuse

*kyaba kura* キャバクラ : abbreviation of "Cabaret Club"; a club where girls in their early twenties entertain male clients with conversation and some light physical flirtation and order snacks and drinks on the clients' tab

*kyabarê* キャバレー : "cabaret"; a dimly lit bar where customers can enjoy drinking beer and making small talk with a woman while she manually or orally stimulates them

*kyôiku mama* 教育ママ : "education mama"; mothers who are excessively devoted to their children's education

*manga* 漫画 : "comic books"

*mazakon* マザコン : abbreviation of "mother complex"

*meshi, furo, neru!* 飯, 風呂, 寝る! : "food, bath, bed!"; allegedly only words said by a husband to his wife upon returning home from work; a cliché for the lot of a salaried man and his wife



*messhi hōkō* 滅私奉行 : an expression of an ideology, "self-sacrifice for the sake of the group" to promote devotion to the state or corporation

*mizu shōbai* 水商売 : literally "the water business"; includes bars, cabarets, Soapland, etc.; euphemism for the sex industry

*moetsuki shōkōgun* 燃えつき症候群 : "burnout syndrome"

*mōretsu* 猛烈 : "intense" or "keen" or "hardworking"

*mōretsu shain* 猛烈社員 : "workaholic"

*nenkō joretsu* 年功序列 : "length of service pay increase"

*mure ochiba* 濡れ落ち葉 : "wet, fallen leaves"; derogatory term used to refer to a bothersome husband being brushed out of the way by a busy housewife only to have him cling to her like wet leaves cling to the ground when one tries to sweep them away

*nyūsha shiki* 入社式 : ceremony to commemorate new employees joining the company, used as the first event to indoctrinate employees into the idea of corporate centrism

*ochūgen* お中元 : "mid-year gift"

*okāsan* お母さん : "mother"

*omiai* お見合い : meeting between singles arranged by a matchmaker for the purpose of finding a marriage partner

*onnarashisa* 女らしさ : "femininity"

*oseibo* お歳暮 : "year-end gift"

*otokorashisa* 男らしさ : "masculinity"

*ore* 俺 : personal pronoun, "I"; very casual term used among male friends, and also by lower class men and rebellious boys

*oyaji* おやじ : "that old man" or "father"; used to affectionately refer to older male figures but it has also been used as a derogatory term in recent years

*ōyuna* 大湯女 : literally "big hot water woman"; euphemism for Kamakura Period bathhouse masseuse

*pinku chirashi* ピンクチラシ : "pink flyers" advertising telephone sex clubs

*raberu no nai kanzume* ラベルのない缶詰 : "unlabeled canned goods"; derogatory term for a retired husband that has been stripped of the company name that used to give him his identity

*rorikon* ロリコン : abbreviation of "Lolita complex"

*rorikon zoku* ロリコン族 : "Lolita complex gang"

*ryōsai kenbo no kyōiku* 良妻賢母の教育 : an expression of an ideology to educate and form girls into good wives and wise mothers

*sarakin jigoku* サラ金地獄 : "loan hell" or hellish situation after borrowing money from a non-bank lender and subsequently become insolvent

*sararīman* サラリーマン : literally "salaried man" from the English term; white-collar corporate employee

*sen'en teishu* 千円亭主 : expression, "thousand yen husbands"

*senpai* 先輩 : members of society or a group that is senior in either rank or age

*settai* 接待 : "to welcome or entertain guests/business clients"; often after hours in hostess clubs or bars

*shaka* 社歌 : "company song"

*shakun* 社訓 : "company constitution" or "mission statement"

*shanai kekkon* 社内結婚 : "inter-company marriage"

*shasei sangyō* 射精産業 : "the ejaculation industry"; term used to designate establishments in Japan that provide various sexual services

*shashō* 社章 : "company badges"

*shiken jigoku* 試験地獄 : "examination hell"; a play on words of "examination wars"

*shinkansen* 新幹線 : "bullet train" that extends throughout the main island of Honshu and can travel at speeds up to 300 kilometers per hour

*shinnyū shainkyōiku* 新入社員教育 : "new employee education"

*shūshin koyōsei* 終身雇用制 : "lifetime employment"

*shūshoku katsudō* 就職活動 : "job hunting" or "recruitment activities"

*sodai gomi* 粗大ゴミ : "giant garbage" used to designate large-size waste such as furniture and refrigerators that need special pick up; derogatory term for retired husbands hanging around the house and doing nothing

*sōpu* ソープ : abbreviation of "Soapland"; a pseudo sauna-massage parlor wherein clients can be bathed and sexually serviced at the same time

*sukebei* 助平 : "horny" or "lecher"

*sukebei oyaji* 助平おやじ : "dirty old man"

*taishoku rikon* 退職離婚 : "divorce upon retirement"

*tanshin funin* 単身赴任 : relocation of an employee to a far away branch without his wife and children accompanying him

*tatemae* 建前 : "feelings shown on the outside" or "official stance"

*teishu wa jōbu de rusu ga ii* 亭主は丈夫で留守がいい : expression, the ideal situation for a housewife that her husband is healthy but away from home

*tere kura* テレクラ : abbreviation of "telephone club"

*tsū shotto daiyaru 2* ショットダイヤル : "two shot dial"; one-on-one telephone sex line

*undōkai* 運動会 : "sports day" or "athletic meet"; used as an event to foster stronger ties among employees

*ware ware nihonjin* 我々日本人 : "we Japanese"; a term implying that all Japanese are homogeneous (of the same mindset, ethnicity, origin, etc.)

*yakuza* やくざ : "Japanese Mafia"; literally an abbreviation of 8 "ya", 9 "ku", and 3 "za", which is the worst roll one can get in the game of dice

*yobikō* 予備校 : "preparatory school"; privately owned and operated

*yūkaku* 遊廓 : “pleasure quarters”; euphemism for a walled-in brothel area established in the Edo Period

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